The Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore

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THE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

MAHARSHI DEVENDRANATH TAGORE

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL BENGALI

BY

SATYENDRANATH TAGORE

AND

INDIRA DEVI

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ILLUSTRATION

MAHARSHI DEVENDRANATH TAGORE. From a drawing by Abanindranath Tagore (1898) . . . *Frontispiece*

INTRODUCTION

I

To certain types of mind the spiritual adventures of man will seem always the most absorbing of all studies; the most real amongst the confusing facts of life. These will, when they are offered the history of a personality, ignore much that the practical man might consider essential; that they may seek at once for those secret guiding lines, the laws of that interior growth, which condition the relation of the self to the world of eternal things.

In the life of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore such readers will find a new document of absorbing interest: one more amongst the small number of authentic histories of the soul. This book must rank with the few classic autobiographies bequeathed to us by certain of the mystics and saints: Suso, Madame Guyon, even the great St. Teresa herself. It is essentially of the same class as the *Testament* of Ignatius Loyola, the *Journal* of George Fox. The *whole life* of the intricately-blended human creature

living "eternal life in the midst of time"—not the mere factual happenings, not alone the intuitions, the meditations and the dreams, but the whole rich complex of elements both finite and infinite, the growth and change, the slow becoming of the soul—this it is which such books, when written with simplicity of purpose and read with attention and humility, bring home to the reader's mind.

Those familiar with the history of the Christian mystics will find again, in the self-revelations of this modern saint of the East, many of those characteristic experiences and doctrines which are the special joy and beauty of our own tradition of the spiritual life. Students who have approached the subject from the psychological rather than the philosophical side are accustomed to think of this life less as a status than as a *growth*; a development, a becoming, which passes through certain well-marked stages on its way to the attainment of that complete maturity, that entire and impassioned identification with eternal interests which mystical writers call "union with God." They have learned too, of recent years, that psychology can offer us some explanation of these normally occurring states, of the alternating periods of joyous illumination and mental distress, the successive experiences, conflicts, and adjustments, undergone by the growing soul. Now here we may see the record of a life—lived within our time, yet totally uninfluenced by the mystical psychology of Europe—which exhibits close

and continuous parallels with the lives of the great historic mystics of the West. Here we see the same curve followed ; here we see the same powers won. Apart then from its other high merits, this work is a valuable weapon in the hands of those who seek to justify the psychological view of mysticism ; who regard it as a life-process, involving organic changes —as representing, in fact, the spiritual side of the evolution of man, and therefore tending to follow the same course wherever it takes its rise.

Here, too, we learn to appreciate the deep saying of the Sūfi, "Those drunk with God, though they are many, are yet one." Though the mystical theologies of the East and the West differ widely—though the ideal of life which they hold out to the soul differs too—yet in the experience of the saints this conflict is seen to be transcended. When the Love of God is reached, divergencies become impossible ; for the soul has passed beyond the sphere of the manifold, and is immersed in the One Reality.

In this Autobiography, those few and primal facts on which rests the whole claim and practice of mysticism are stated with that passion which is found only in the saints. The mutual attraction between the soul and the divine ; God conceived — more, seized and experienced—as spirit's true Home and Country, Food and Lover ; and the hunger and thirst, desolation and loneliness of the spirit which knows itself separated from Him, are here felt as the

fundamental truths of our human life. "In the midst of untold wealth my soul was in agony, not having found Thee. Now, finding Thee, I have found everything." It is Augustine's *Inquietum est cor nostrum*, actualised within another personality; which has felt, first in the fret and anguish of resistance, then in the joy of self-surrender, the pull of the Magnet of the Universe drawing all things to their home. "For our natural will," says Julian of Norwich, "is to have God, and the goodwill of God is to have us; and we may never cease from longing till we have Him in fulness of joy." Again, that consciousness of an Infinite Life and Love pressing in on the soul, desiring it and soliciting it, which Christians call "grace," and which Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven* has made familiar to thousands wholly ignorant of the categories of theology—the indestructible fact which such metaphors as the Following Love, the Knocker at the Door, the Seeker of the Lost, the King and the Beggar-Maid represent—runs like a thread of fire through these pages. We are made to feel with the Maharshi the inexhaustible generosity of the Divine Life pouring like a torrent into the surrendered soul; the steadfast pressure of those invading floods of living water which inspired Meister Eckhart's bold utterance, "Thou needest not call Him from a distance; to wait until thou openest is harder for Him than for thee. He needs thee a thousand times

more than thou canst need Him." So Devendranath Tagore: "I was satisfied with getting so much; but He was not content with giving so little"—a sentence which would have been golden on the lips of St. Augustine himself.

Here, too, we find, I think, that synthesis which is perhaps the highest achievement of the mystical consciousness: the fusion in one living whole, one wide, deep, and ardent intuition, of the personal and metaphysical, transcendent and immanent aspects under which the Deity is apprehended by human consciousness. The imperfect mystic leans always to one or other of these ways of actualising his communion with Reality. He is Absolutist or Pantheist, Monist or Transcendentalist; his intense apprehension of a personal love drifts into anthropomorphism, or his "cosmic consciousness" robs his sense of union with God of all closeness and intimacy, and reduces it to the status of bare idea. It has been said of the Christian mystics that "they are either God-lovers or Christ-lovers, but seldom both"; and there are many, both inside and outside the Christian tradition, of whom the substance of this accusation is undoubtedly true. But the great spiritual genius accepts unflinchingly the paradox which these opposing concepts represent; for both are needed if the deep experience of his heart is to find expression. Monism alone is no description of the fact that he finds God within his heart: for an invincible separateness is

an essential factor in the closest union of love. On the other hand, anthropomorphism offers him a mere parody of that spiritual intercourse : yet this, even in its crudest form, does preserve one aspect of truth for which Monism finds no place. The whole fact inevitably exceeds and overflows all expressions which try to contain it. Hence, transcending and uniting all such descriptions, all experiences, the greatest of the mystics have discerned an ultimate Reality "in itself" ; which lies beyond the horizon of all human thinking, though never beyond the span of human loving. It is "that which is *beyond* the Infinite," says the poet Kabir ; it is the "Desert of Godhead" which Eckhart described as containing within Itself all aspects and persons of God ; the "limitless Abyss of Pure Simplicity" of which Ruysbroeck tries to tell in stammering accents ; the "point" in which a few other great Christian contemplatives have seen the Blessed Trinity as *one*. Hints of a realisation of this Whole, the "Superessential Reality" which "may well be loved but not thought," are found, to a greater or less extent, in all great spiritual experience ; helping us to understand how it is that the mystical genius can never rest either in a Monism which declares his oneness with God, or a Transcendentalism which insists on the invincible distinction between creature and Creator. He needs both these completing opposites if he is to actualise his vision of Reality and "comprehend with all the

saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height."

Thou art the sky, and thou art the nest as well.

As the poems of Rabindranath Tagore are examples, unique in our time, rare in any time, of this synthetic mysticism, a whole and balanced attitude to the infinite and intimate, transcendent and immanent reality of God, as they speak to us out of life itself, yet not out of the thin and restless plane of existence which we call by that august name; so that same depth and richness of view, which escapes alike extreme Absolutism and extreme Immanentism, which embraces the universal without ever losing touch of the personal, is found to be the governing intuition of his father's life.

"Seekers after God," says Devendranath Tagore in words singularly reminiscent of St. Paul, "must realise Brahma in these three places. They must see Him within, see Him without, and see Him in that abode of Brahma where He exists in Himself. When we see Him within our soul we say, 'Thou art the innermost soul of the soul; thou art my Father, thou art my Friend, thou art my Comrade.' When we see Him without us we say, 'Thy royal throne is in the infinite sky.' When we see Him in Himself, see that supreme Truth in His own sanctuary, then we say, 'Thou art in Thine own Self supreme Goodness and Peace.' . . . By His grace I

have now come to believe that the Yogi who can see this Trinity of His at one and the same time, and see that while existing in Himself He exists in the hearts of us all, while existing in Himself He exists outside us all, and exists in Himself, self-contained and self-conscious, time without end, he is the true Yogi . . . he is the foremost amongst those that worship Brahma."

So much for affirmation. In the direction of criticism we find this great sane and balanced spiritual genius meeting one by one, recognising and refusing —even when they appear to be countenanced by those ancient Upanishads which he loved—the classic dangers, heresies, and excesses to which the mystical temperament has always been liable. Of these exaggerations, the chief are an excessive pantheism, an excessive quietism, a refusal of all reality to the world of appearance, an arrogant and complete identification of the soul's substance with the Being of God. Many Western students will read with delight in these pages the Maharshi's whole-hearted refusal of the doctrines of Monism, of the "Avatars" or Divine Incarnations, and of Maya. These venerable dogmas were expressly excluded from the book of teachings—the Brâhma-dharma—which he composed under the guidance of his Inner Light. The relation between God and the soul, he says, is the relation of closest friendship: hence the classic declaration of Hindu Monism, "*I am* that Supreme

Deity—I am none other," he pronounces with uncompromising directness to be a "senseless formula." The Universe, again, is "no dream stuff; it is relative truth, as its Creator is Truth of Truth." Therefore the doctrine of Maya, in that form in which it dismisses the whole phenomenal world as illusion, must be repudiated. The belief in Nirvâna, if the word be taken as meaning "salvation by annihilation," and in "unworthy vain imaginings" concerning re-incarnations of the soul on earth, share the same fate. So sure is his touch upon realities, so authoritative the inner voice which guides him, that he unhesitatingly rejects even the traditional scriptures of his own people, where they seem to countenance a view which his own direct experience has shown him to involve exaggeration or mistake. "The pure heart filled with the light of intuitive knowledge" was for him as authentic a source of divine wisdom as it was for George Fox himself; and indeed his attitude and his life—at once so interior and so apostolic—present strong and numerous parallels with those of the great Quaker. Nothing perhaps could contrast more strongly with the normal Western idea of the Indian mystic than the Maharshi's long and active career, the character of the vision which inspired it, the doctrine which he taught. The Christian promise of "more abundant life" as a fruit of the love and knowledge of God has received no clearer fulfilment. His missionary labours, his arduous and enthusiastic

pilgrimages, his genius for friendship, his deep passion for nature, his sane and balanced outlook upon humanity, his intense interest in the events of his time, no less than the ecstatic life of contemplation which ran side by side with his active career—all are rooted in this. He was no amateur of a thin and rarefied spirituality, but that rare creation, a whole man. In following the curve of his development so far as this Autobiography describes it, and comparing his experience of the Mystic Way with that of other great initiates of Reality, this fact, I think, will be brought home even to the most recalcitrant of spiritual patriots.

II

Translated into that language of spiritual experience which is most familiar to Western students, this story of the evolution of a saint begins—as so many of these "life-giving lives" do begin—by a sudden, profound experience of Reality, an abrupt perception of the Eternal World: occurring at that crucial moment of adolescence when life, having completed one of her great stages of growth, hesitates upon the brink of the next. The night-scene at the burning-ghat which is described at the opening of the second chapter of this Autobiography entailed,

for the spirit which experienced it, an inner crisis strictly equivalent to that change of consciousness, that profound transvaluation of all values, which the Christian mystics often call "New Birth." The abrupt and overwhelming conviction of the unreality of the phenomenal world, the violent uprush of joy, the genuine change of heart, which are the self's first natural reactions to the impact of Reality —these are completely characteristic of it. Such an experience is organic rather than religious. It is the true beginning of a new life and growth, the germinating of that spiritual seed which is latent in every human soul; manifesting itself in the emotional sphere by joy as towards the Eternal World now realised, and by renunciation as towards all those ephemeral interests and possessions which had seemed precious in the past. "I was," says the Maharshi, "no longer the same man . . . my mind could scarcely contain the unworldly joy, so simple and natural, which I experienced."

We need not look far in the annals of Western sanctity for parallels to this event. Thus St. Francis of Assisi, twenty-four years old, brought up to a life of pleasure like Devendranath himself, was "suddenly smitten by unwonted visitations"— "simple and natural" indeed, yet final in their effects on his life—in the lonely church of S. Damiano: so that, emerging from that swift contact with God, he "found himself another man,"

tinctured for evermore with new enthusiasms, freed from the illusions of his past. Again, Heinrich Suso tells us that he received at the age of eighteen such an abrupt revelation of the Infinite; and with it "a joy such as he might have known in the seeing of the shapes and substances of all joyful things . . . exciting in him a most lively desire for God." Brother Lawrence, at the same age, was redeemed once for all from the slavery of illusion by perceiving the "power of God" in the life of a tree: "which view set him perfectly loose from the world," and initiated his mystical career.

Moreover the passion for poverty, the hatred and fear of possessions and all unreal objects of desire, is a normal outward accompaniment of this interior change. A glad and complete renunciation—"forgetfulness of the world and all that is not God"—summed up for Pascal his necessary reaction to the vision of Reality. So, too, St. Anthony the Great, the prosperous young Egyptian, distributing all his possessions to the poor; St. Francis, rejecting a life of gaiety and ease to strip off his very clothes in the square of Assisi; Richard Rolle, the brilliant Oxford student, abandoning his family and prospects, and taking to the roads in his home-made hermit's dress—these represent the response of awakened spirit to those same imperatives which now caused the young Devendranath Tagore to give outward form to his interior sense of renunciation, his instinct

for freedom, by distributing his personal belongings to his friends. It is the first appearance of that which is really the dominant tendency of this and all other truly mystical lives: the perpetual effort to actualise the Infinite within the finite, to make of life a valid sacrament in which, so far as human nature may accomplish it, a perpetually developing outward sign shall go step by step with the perpetually developing inward grace.

The intense exaltation of consciousness in which the mystical life-process most often begins—the flaming vision, the enraptured heart—brings inevitably its own penalty. The mind, unable long to endure this high tension, for which nothing has prepared it in the past, relapses to those old levels of perception which it once mistook for Reality but can never so mistake again. The spirit which has perceived Perfection, the heart which has had communion with it, swings back to a bitter realisation of the imperfection and unreality of the universe in which it seems condemned to dwell. Hence the gloom, unrest, and loss of interest in normal life which often at this point torment the spiritual adolescent: usually taking in the Christian mystic the subjective and ethical form of penitence and "conviction of sin," and spurring him on to vigorous moral efforts and readjustments; and producing in the more metaphysical Eastern mind the moods of world-weariness, disillusion, and despair. Both have

seen for an instant "that Vision which is of all things most desired," and nothing less can ever again content them. "I longed," says Devendranath, "for a repetition of that ecstatic feeling. I lost all interest in everything else." Yet the ecstatic feeling ever eluded him; the "first fine careless rapture" had done its work, and could not be recaptured by any effort of the will. That terrible process of *detachment*, which forms the first stage in the mystical way of purgation, was now in process of accomplishment; that eradication of all self-interest, even of the most spiritual kind, all tendency to rest in supersensual joys; that dreadful isolation of the soul in the midst of a world which has now become unreal to it. It is the rhythm of detachment, says Kabir, which beats time to the music of love. These are the compensating movements of a process which is one; and this neophyte, like his predecessors, was obliged to endure its pain as well as its joy. "Darkness was all around me. The temptations of the world had ceased, but the sense of God was no nearer: earthly and heavenly happiness were alike withdrawn."

"By love," says a great English contemplative, "He may be gotten and holden, by thought never." But every active mind entering on the quest of God must make this discovery for itself. So here we see the Maharshi, like so many of his spiritual ancestors, first trying to find the one object of his desire by intellectual means, and suffering anew from the

resulting sense of frustration. "My endeavour was to obtain God, not through blind faith but by the light of knowledge. And being unsuccessful in this, my mental struggles increased from day to day. Sometimes I thought I could live no longer." One by one he found and tested all those blind alleys down which man has tried to find a pathway to Reality; yet in spite of much knowledge gained, illumination and peace did not come. He lived in that state of psychic weariness and distress which Christian ascetics call "a continual aridity"—"dead to all happiness, earthly and divine,"—until the moment, about four years after his conversion, in which this necessary phase in the development of all heroic spirituality reached its term. Then the pendulum of consciousness swung out once more towards the Infinite; and the illumination which he had sought with such persistency and unsuccess suddenly streamed in on him, flooding him with light and joy.

The way in which this change was effected is singularly characteristic of the mystical type, which seems to the ordinary observer to develop, not by a steady growth but by a series of "saltatory ascents"; each of them having something of the crucial quality of a new conversion. Long periods of instability are succeeded by a sudden shifting of consciousness to higher levels; apparently brought about by some external agency, natural or "supernatural"—a

word, a sign, a message—but really the result of all the interior travail that has gone before. Thus St. Augustine tells us that his long incertitude and agony of mind was instantly brought to an end when, obeying the child's voice which said "Tolle! lege!" he opened the Scriptures; and reading a phrase in the Epistle to the Romans, found it to be charged for him with a special and divine significance. "As I reached the end of the sentence, the light of peace seemed to be shed upon my heart; and every shadow of doubt melted away." So in the Maharshi's case the agent which effected the transition from the "purgative" to the "illuminative" way, was a text of the Upanishads; which, crystallising intuitions long growing beneath the surface, resolving the disharmonies of his thought and pointing the way to peace, seemed to him "like a divine voice descending from heaven." "I got just what I wanted. I had never heard my most intimate thoughts expressed like this anywhere else . . . it was not the dictum of my own poor intellect, it was the word of God Himself. . . . Oh, what a blessed day was that for me—a day of heavenly happiness!" Like Angela of Foligno and many another, in this moment "the eyes of his soul were opened and he beheld the plenitude of God."

That state of mind and heart which the mystics call "illumination"—the full and loving apprehension of the spiritual universe—takes many forms.

It impelled Devendranath Tagore, a man of active temperament and strong intellect, to something which closely resembled a missionary career. His was an apostolic nature ; he was forced to share with others the truth that he had found. In the hard and definite work of organising and inspiring the religious movement of the Brâhma-Samaj, he found that outlet for his enthusiasm and love which Francis found in the life of a preaching friar, Ignatius in the formation of the Society of Jesus, Fox and Wesley in the spreading of the Quaker and the Methodist ideals. One and all, these are efforts—often fragmentary and generally misunderstood—to actualise within the temporal order, to communicate to other men, the vision of Reality by which their founders were possessed. They are demonstrations of the fact that "love cannot be lazy," cannot keep itself to itself.

In the life of the Maharshi, the illuminative period seems to have lasted for seventeen years — from the twenty-second to the thirty-ninth year of his age—and to have followed a course closely parallel to that which we find in the case of many great Christian saints. Gradually, as it develops, we see the appearance of those peculiar powers and forms of apprehension—adaptations, as it were, of the mental machinery to the new purposes of the spiritual life—which are of almost universal occurrence in persons of this psychophysical type. Though he

has left few records of anything approaching visionary experience—and indeed the intensely metaphysical and spiritual apprehension of the Divine Nature which was habitual to him, and his decided aversion from religion of an incarnational type, would almost inevitably prevent such an expression of his communion with Reality — interior voices, and the phenomena generally and loosely known as "inspiration" now began to play a considerable part in Devendranath's life. In the strange dream described in the fifteenth chapter, and again in the experience of chapter thirty-seven, where, emerging from deep contemplation, he "saw the eyes of God within the forest," we seem to see examples of that tendency to involuntary dramatisation frequently present in genius of this kind: which so commonly presents its intuitions to the surface mind in a pictorial, musical, or allegorical form. So too, he knew well, like St. Paul, the experience of the "pressure of the Spirit." More and more as he advanced towards mystical maturity, an inner voice, a secondary personality, dictated his actions and laid upon him its commands. As Fox was compelled, in defiance of all prudence, to "speak what the Lord commanded," so for the Maharshi the "solemn commandment of the guide within" was imperative. An interesting example of this—involving, too, a curious instance of the close connection between mental and bodily states — occurs in the thirty-eighth

chapter of the Autobiography, at a crisis which seems to correspond with his entrance on the Unitive Way.

Again, in the account of the way in which the Book of Brâhma-dharma came to be written we have an unusually perfect example of that inspired composition, related on the one hand to the phenomena of automatic writing, on the other to the outpourings of prophetic genius, which is familiar to students of mysticism. It was thus that Madame Guyon, Boehme, and Blake produced the greater part of their writings. St. Catherine of Siena dictated her great *Dialogue* when in a state approaching ecstasy. St. Teresa when composing the *Interior Castle* felt herself to be the tool of the Spirit, and complained that her pen could hardly keep pace with the flood of inspiration by which she was possessed. None of these, however, have left a more vivid account of their experiences than has Devendranath Tagore; and this chapter alone has given to the psychology of religion a modern document which is likely to prove of permanent value, illustrating and corroborating the narratives left by the mystics of the past. Thus he tells us that "I laid my heart fervently open to God. The spiritual truths that dawned on my heart through His grace I went on uttering, as fluently and forcibly as the current of a river falling from the mouth of the Upanishads. . . . The work does not repre-

sent the sweat of my brow, but the outpourings of my heart." So Madame Guyon in almost equivalent terms: "As soon as I began to read Holy Scripture, I was caused to write the passage that I had read, and at once the interpretation of it was given to me. . . . I wrote with an inconceivable swiftness, for the hand could hardly keep up with the dictating spirit." Again, Jacob Boehme says of his own voluminous writings: "All was ordered according to the direction of the Spirit, which often went in haste . . . so that the penman's hand, by reason he was not accustomed to it, did often shake. And though I could have wrote in a more accurate, fair, and plain manner, yet the Burning Fire often forced forward with speed, and the hand and pen must hasten directly after it."

Plainly all these refer to the same type of experience; the emergence from below the threshold, the violent and ungovernable expression, of that transcendental consciousness, those spiritual intuitions, which have been growing in strength during the course of the illuminative way.

The gradual development of this state of illumination may be traced very clearly in the Maharshi's confessions, from its first appearance at the age of twenty-two; the steady growth of spiritual intensity and of secondary automatic characters, running side by side with an active career of remarkable fulness and variety. The genius for organisation, so often

found in the great mystics, early showed itself in him ; though it was exercised only at the price of a deliberate renunciation of the lonely, contemplative existence—the long pilgrimages to solitary places—which he loved. At twenty-eight he had already attained that state of simple communion with Divine Reality which the Christian mystics call "the practice of the Presence of God." As Brother Lawrence said that " he was more united to God in his outward employments than when he left them for devotion in retirement," and was as much helped by this conscious companionship in his business in the kitchen as during the set times of meditation and prayer, so for the Maharshi "a deep and living connection was established with Him . . . I had seen Him face to face, had heard His voice of command, and had become His constant companion. . . . I came to know now that He was the life of my life, the Friend of my heart ; that I could not pass a single moment without Him." This state reached its climax when he was about thirty-one years old, the period of the composition of the Book of Brâhmadharma—a date which coincided with one of those moral crises which so often mark the full establishment of the mystical consciousness upon a new level of life.

At this period the death of his father, and the financial difficulties which followed quickly upon it, gave to Devendranath the opportunity for that

total renunciation of all property which he regarded, in the true Franciscan spirit, as the great and central blessing of his life; conferring on him in fullest perfection the liberty which he had long desired. "That was a day of days at the burning ground, and this day was just such another! I had taken another step forward. . . . I became totally free from all desire. I had read in the Upanishads about the peace and happiness of him who desires nothing, and now I tasted of it in real life." "To have nothing, to be nothing, to desire nothing"—the universal mystic longing—now seemed within his reach.

But the chains which bound him to the world of things were not so easily severed. That complete interior renunciation, of which outward poverty is but the sacrament, was destined to find expression in another way, and one far less congenial to the mystic temperament. It was found that the utter confusion in which the affairs of the firm of Carr, Tagore & Co. had been left could best be remedied, not merely by the willing sacrifice of property, but by the more difficult sacrifice of time and attention. Devendranath Tagore felt it to be his duty to co-operate in the work of reorganisation; and for nearly ten years his splendid energies were divided between the administration of the firm's estates and the control of the Brâhma-Samaj Church, its doctrine, services, and literature. What we see here is no picture of a spiritual in-

dividualist renouncing the world in the interests of his own soul; but a great and noble personality taking up the burden of existence and spending upon others the powers which he has won, as St. Catherine of Genoa did in the busy hospital, or the Blessed Joan of Arc on the battle-field.

Now we know, from a comparison of the records left behind them by the great mystics of the past, that their life is no steady progress in divine graces and spiritual joys. They go on from strength to strength, it is true; but it is a strength that is "made perfect in weakness." As each great stage of ascent reaches its term, it exhausts itself. Then the state of consciousness which it has tended to establish breaks up, and is succeeded by a painful period of transition in which the self endures once again all those torments of dimness, uncertainty, and effort which accompanied its first purification and dedication to the Mystic Way. Through this break-up of the old state of consciousness, this psychic disequilibrium and distress, as through a "second birth," the mystic must pass to that second or "theopathetic" life of complete identification with the divine purpose which is called the "Unitive Way." In the Autobiography of Devendranath Tagore we may see this process taking place, as clearly as in the classic lives of Suso, St. Teresa, or Madame Guyon. It is characteristic of such a condition that exterior and interior trials—spiritual

misery and worldly griefs—seem to combine to oppress the victim ; who is really, though he knows it not, a victim of love. As, in the physical order, the adolescent is an easy prey to trials and miseries which both the child and the adult—each firmly established in his own universe—are able to resist ; so for the spiritual adolescent who is passing through this period of transition, the vexations of practical life often assume an unbearable aspect, for he is no longer perfectly adjusted to them, and yet has not won his foothold on a higher plane.

Thus we find that about 1856 his family debts and worries were felt by the Maharshi no longer as a stimulus to effort, but as an intolerable burden ; and that the friends whom he had found sympathetic, were sympathetic no more. The inevitable period of psychic fatigue and disequilibrium had set in ; that state of depression, impotence, and stress in which Madame Guyon felt that "crosses of every kind abounded," and which drew from Suso the pathetic complaint, "O Lord ! Thy tournaments last a very long time." Devendranath found himself completely out of harmony with his world, for his spirit was moving towards a fresh stage of growth. A burning desire for a life of solitude, austerity, and total concentration upon God, impossible amidst the bustle of practical life, now obsessed him ; and at last, in the month of Ashwin 1857—the year of the Indian Mutiny—he set out alone upon his travels,

fully intending to adopt the traditional life of a wandering ascetic, and never again return to his family and home. "The world could hold back my mind no longer, and I broke loose from its delusive coils."

During the three years of travel which are described in the thirty-first to thirty-eighth chapters, we see the Maharshi's spiritual consciousness, released from the constant fret of "practical" life, steadily advancing towards maturity. At some period of their lives the great contemplatives seem always to need such a time of "lonely dwelling"; with its wide spaces of silence, its direct communion with Nature and with God. Then, as Rolle the Hermit has it: "in the wilderness the Beloved may speak to the heart of the lover, as it were a bashful lover that his sweetheart before men entreats not." The strength and refreshment which the Egyptian solitaries found in the deserts of the Thebaid, St. Francis upon the wild mountain of La Verna, Richard Rolle in his hermit's cell, St. Catherine of Siena in her three years of deliberate solitude, Devendranath Tagore now won from his long retirement in the Himalayas. The influence of Nature upon his spirit had always been great. Now, in his first experience of the mountains, he seemed to discover the landscape-setting which the drama of his soul required. "The higher I climbed, the higher did my mind become."

Amongst the disturbances caused by the outbreak of

the Mutiny, the extreme hardship of mountain travel, his inner life was marked by steady increase of peace and joy. More and more he entered into the very heart of Reality; seeing the presence of God, "the mark of His most skilful hand" revealed in all natural things, and enjoying "His delightful companionship" alike during his arduous mountain expeditions and in the long hours of intense contemplation which were now habitual to him. Released from the tension of worldly business, he became ever more deeply immersed in God, finding in the impassioned poetry of the Sufi Hafiz a congenial expression of the burning love which filled his heart. As St. Catherine of Genoa, and after her St. Teresa, dwelling in God would sing all day for joy, and Richard Rolle's joyful love "with great voice outbreaking" caused him to "sing his prayers to a ghostly symphony," so the Maharshi would now travel all day in an ecstasy of contentment, chanting aloud the great Persian's ardent songs. His contemplative powers were developing swiftly, and tending more and more to monopolise the field of consciousness. During the rainy season at Simla, when climbing was impossible, he spent half the night in such joyous and intimate communion—that "great art of heavenly conversation" which Thomas à Kempis so beautifully extols in the *Imitation of Christ* — meditating during the day, "with folded limbs and concentrated mind,"

upon the "irrefutable truths concerned with first principles" which had been declared by his predecessors, the great Rishis of the past. Thus a balance was struck between the metaphysical and the emotional sides of contemplation; preventing that excessive and one-sided development either of intellect or of heart which is one of the chief perils attending upon the mystical temperament.

That supreme unitive vision of God, as at once transcendent and immanent, personal and cosmic, "the Inward, the Outward, the First, and the Last," which is achieved in the greatest of the saints, was now developing itself; and we may trace in this Autobiography, as in the songs of Kabir and of Jalalu'ddin, and the great works of Ruysbroeck, Angela of Foligno, or Mechthild of Magdeburg, the alternations of wide, impersonal intuition and intimate, adoring love which mark its gradual establishment within the field of consciousness. "Those nights in which I felt His intimate companionship I repeated aloud in ecstasy,

> 'Do not bring a lamp into my audience-hall to-day!
> To-night that full moon, my Friend, is shining here!'"

Yet this close personal union was balanced and completed by a vivid consciousness of the immanent Divine Spirit inspiring and supporting all natural things. "He Himself pervades the tree through and through; but Him we cannot see." By hours of rapt absorption, by long discipline in an asceticism

never excessive because rooted and grounded in love, the inner vision in which these completing opposites become one was at last attained by him. "*I saw God*, not with fleshly eyes but with the inner vision, from these Himalayan hills, the holy land of Brahma." The experience was an ineffable one; and only by recourse to the universal mystic imagery of light, can he suggest to us something of its splendour. He had seen, he says with Hafiz, "the great sun-coloured Being beyond this darkness." So Dante:

> . . . la mia vista, venendo sincera
> e più e più entrava per lo raggio
> dell' alta Luce che da sè è vera.
> Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio
> che il parlar nostro, ch' a tal vista cede,
> e cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio!

Now we may divide all those mystics who achieve the state they call "union with God" into two groups: those who are content with the fruition of Divine Reality which they have won, and are willing to rest in a life of pure contemplation, and those whom this communication of transcendent vitality does but spur on to new and life-giving tasks. For the one, the act of union is the goal; for the other, that life of unity to which union is the initiating sacrament. The first type is often regarded as more generally characteristic of Eastern mysticism, but Devendranath Tagore cannot be

claimed in support of this view. The chapter in which he describes his attainment of the Beatific Vision ends, not upon the subjective note of personal rapture, spiritual satisfaction, the ecstatic self-mergence of the soul in the Absolute, but with a quotation from Hafiz which strikes a noble —and to Western ears a Christian—note of self-giving charity to men :

> Henceforward I shall radiate light from my heart upon the world.

Divine Fecundity, say the great mystics of the West—the bringing forth of new life, the spreading of more light—is the true object of the soul's union with God. Those in whom this union is perfected are called to a spiritual parenthood. Like the salt, the light, the leaven of the Gospel, they must not keep themselves to themselves. As Tauler has it, a point comes at which they must be "content to leave off learning and no more enjoy feeling and fire; and must serve the Lord with strenuous industry and at their own cost." Their necessary period of world-denial is a time of education in the interests of the race; it does but prepare them to be the agents of a world-renewal. Now, see this deep law of the spiritual life illustrated, driven home, within the experience of a modern saint of the East. When his retreat in the Himalayas had lasted for nearly two years, as he stood one day gazing at a mountain

torrent—a sight which always filled him with special exaltation and joy—the solemn voice which so often directed his actions told the Maharshi that his education was finished, his respite from the fret of active life was at an end. As the pure and foaming river must rush down to the plains, accept the stains of earth, and humble its pride in order to fertilise the land, so must he. "The truth thou hast gained, the devotion and trustfulness that thou hast learnt here—go! make them known to the world."

The shock was a terrible one, for he had believed himself called to a life-long retreat. The thirty-eighth chapter of the Autobiography witnesses to the awful struggle which now took place; a struggle clearly directed towards that last, most drastic purification of the spirit, utter self-naughting, profound humiliation, complete surrender to the will of God, which all the great saints must undergo. On the one hand, all the attractions of that ascetic life to which he had so patiently trained himself, years of heavenly intimacy opening before him, lived within the atmosphere of Reality in "this holy land of the Himalayas"; on the other, a return to the confusions and trivialities of the active life, a perpetual effort to discern the spiritual harmonies amongst the deafening noises of the world. The experience of Gethsemane is not confined to the initiates of Christianity. It is a universal phase in the soul's growth; and *Fiat voluntas tua*—complete surrender—is the master-

key which opens all those doors through which they "come from the East and the West" to sit down in the kingdom of God.

In the lives of the mystics we find many parallels to the storm through which the Maharshi now passed; to the mental and physical sufferings which accompanied this collision between the will of man and the will of God. The trial which brings about the crisis may be of many types. Suso, who had been so long a spoiled child of Eternal Wisdom, writhing in agony under a calumny which he could not disprove, rebelling against his humiliation, "raving as one who had lost his senses," till at last he came to himself and turning to God abandoned himself to His will saying, "if it cannot be otherwise, *fiat voluntas tua*": St. Teresa, flung from closest communion into "an extraordinary solitude," and accepting in God's name His apparent loss: many another natural contemplative forced from the privileges of Mary to the uncongenial career of Martha by pressure of that inexorable Will—all these are passing through the same hard process, and in all it effects the same necessary change. Now at last the old centre of consciousness is disestablished; in that which the German mystics call the "Upper School of Perfect Self-Abandonment," the old instinctive desire for personal transcendence, personal happiness, personal achievement of God, which has driven the self so far, is put away. The long adolescence of the soul

is over, the rearrangement of character about its new centre is complete, and the new, transmuted creature which comes out from the fire of the alchemist is changed to that strange heroic thing, a *Man* of God. He has passed, in the words of Ruysbroeck, from the essential life of Union to the superessential life of Unity; where man's will is not merely attuned to the Divine Will, but is one thing with it. "It was God's command that I should go back home," says Devendranath Tagore, "could man's will hold out against that? . . . His will was my law. Harmonising my will with His, I made ready to go home."

He returned, then, from Simla to Calcutta, a hard and indeed a dangerous journey, for the Indian Mutiny was only just over; and with this sacramental act of sacrifice, perhaps the greatest of which he was capable, the Autobiography comes to an end. In it we have seen the movement of a great soul through all those stages of organic growth, those strange oscillations of consciousness which mark the development of the saints; and which represent the movement of human life towards higher levels, its difficult establishment in fresh fields of activity. In a sense the long disciplines, the interior crises through which the Maharshi had passed, the great contemplative powers which he had won, were but preparatory to the apostolic career of religious reform upon which he now entered: a period of

forty-six years, spent in obeying the divine command to "make known to the world the truth which he had gained." He was now forty-one years of age, mature in spirit as in body, filled with an abundant life, capable as never before of holding a steady balance between the worlds of spirit and of sense. The double life of action and contemplation, of supernal love and of human work, towards which that God Who is both active and at rest had led through joy and pain the growing soul, was possible to him at last. We know from the witness of others the courage and industry with which that self-giving life was led: a life, rooted in the Infinite yet manifesting itself in a universal charity towards all finite things, which obtained for Devendranath even in his lifetime the title of "great saint." His aim was the aim of all the true mystics, to "be to the Eternal Goodness what his own hand is to a man" —an instrument wherewith the Supreme Artist could do His creative work. His achievement might have been expressed in the beautiful words which Walt Whitman has placed on the lips of the aged Columbus—that perfect type of heroic love in action, whose every enterprise was filled with God:

Thou knowest my years entire, my life,
My long and crowded life of active work, not adoration merely;
Thou knowest the prayers and vigils of my youth,
Thou knowest my manhood's solemn and visionary meditations,
Thou knowest how before I commenced I devoted all to come
to Thee,

Thou knowest I have in age ratified all those vows and strictly kept them,
Thou knowest I have not once lost nor faith nor ecstasy in Thee . . .
Accepting all from Thee, as duly come from Thee.

EVELYN UNDERHILL.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

BY THE TRANSLATOR

This translation is offered as a humble tribute to my father's memory, in the hope that it may reach a wider circle of readers than the original could possibly command. To facilitate a fuller comprehension of this simple narrative, I subjoin a short sketch of my father's life, and of the Brâhma-Samaj with which he was so thoroughly identified; carrying it for the sake of completeness beyond the period covered by the Autobiography.

Devendranath Tagore, latterly known as *Maharshi*, or the Saint, was born in Jaishtha (May) 1817, in the family mansion at Jorasanko, Calcutta. Having received an early education in the school founded by Raja Rammohan Roy, he, in his fourteenth year, joined the Hindu College; which was, in those days, an educational institution of some standing and repute. My father, son of the wealthy Dwarkanath Tagore whose lavish expenditure earned for him the title of prince, was, as may be imagined, brought up in the midst of pomp and luxury. In the formation

of his early religious impressions, he was influenced by the traditions of an orthodox Hindu household, and, above all, by the teachings and example of his grandmother, under whose loving care he seems to have spent a happy childhood. So he grew up a wilful young man — holding the religion of his forefathers in great reverence, though practically more mindful of his worldly than spiritual interests. But certain providential occurrences, which are graphically described in the Autobiography, wrought a change in him on his attaining manhood, and he felt within himself an awakening towards a higher life.

In 1839 he established a Society called the Tatwabodhini Sabha, which held regular weekly meetings at his house, where discourses on religious subjects were delivered. Besides these, monthly meetings were held for worship, when prayers were offered, and texts from the Upanishads were recited and expounded. The Sabha started a monthly Theological Journal, the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*, which, under the able editorship of Akshay Kumar Datta, rendered valuable service to liberal theology and Bengali literature, and which, after many vicissitudes, still exists as a Bengali monthly. After some years, the Tatwabodhini Sabha was incorporated into the Brâhma-Samaj. The Maharshi, in his Autobiography, gives an interesting account of the first anniversary meeting of the

Sabha, which was celebrated with great *éclat* in 1842. It was in the same year that my father paid his first visit to the Brâhma-Samaj. The Samaj, it must be stated here, was not then an organised community ; it consisted merely of a small knot of persons, who met together from time to time to recite the Vedas and offer spiritual worship. Raja Rammohan Roy had founded the Samaj in 1828, and consecrated for its use a house of worship some time later (11th Magha 1830). Since then, his worthy coadjutor Ramchandra Vidyávagish had zealously served as a minister of the Samaj ; but the congregation was not growing, and the Cause, if anything, seemed yearly to languish. But when my father joined the Samaj, everything was changed. He devoted himself with zeal and energy to its reorganisation, introduced a regular form of worship, including prayers for spiritual light and strength, and drew up a covenant for promoting consistency of conduct among the brotherhood.

My father himself and nineteen others were the first to sign the Brâhmic Covenant and publicly accept initiation at the hands of Pandit Vidyávagish. "As the twenty young men, dressed in suitable attire, approached the Pandit, and repeated with reverential awe the solemn words of the covenant, the feelings of the old minister overpowered him to such an extent that he sobbed like a child, and could not deliver the sermon he had intended to

preach, but only said, 'Oh! how I wish that Rammohan Roy were present on this day.' "[1]

In 1844 my father established a Tatwabodhini Pathshala, or Theological School for the teaching of Vedanta and the training of young men to preach the Brâhma religion; and in the following year he sent four students to Benares for higher theological studies. Each of these Brâhmans was instructed to study one of the Vedas in the holy city. These men were, after their return, employed as preachers and ministers of the Brâhma-Samaj. Of these, Pandit Ananda Chandra Vedantavagish was the most conspicuous. He held the post of chief minister of the Samaj till his death, published various editions of Vedanta works and the Bhagavat-gita, and was the editor of the Srauta and Grihya sutras, published in the *Bibliotheca Indica* of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

The year 1845 was memorable in the history of the Samaj, for the strenuous efforts put forth by the Brâhmas to defend their religion against the attacks of Christian missionaries. Dr. Duff had published the year before unmerited strictures on the Brâhmas and their religion in his work, *India and Indian Missions.* He described the Brâhma-Samaj as a sect of Vedantists who believed in the infallibility of the Vedas. This statement led the Brâhmas to a formal consideration of their position.

[1] Related by Pandit Shivnath Shastri.

It was discovered that, in the Samaj itself, there was wide disagreement as to the degree of authority to be accorded to the sacred books. Akshay Kumar Datta, the editor of the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*, who was the intellectual leader, as my father was the spiritual head, of the Samaj, refused to acknowledge their infallibility. Finally, after much discussion, my father formally renounced the doctrine of verbal inspiration. At a general meeting of the Brâhmas, it was agreed that the Vedas, Upanishads, and other ancient writings were not to be accepted as infallible guides, that Reason and Conscience were to be the supreme authority, and the teachings of the Scriptures were to be accepted only in so far as they harmonised with the light within us.

With the increase in the number of worshippers, the want of a text-book for their guidance was keenly felt. In order to supply that want my father compiled and published the *Brâhma Dharma Grantha*, a valuable theistic manual of religion and morals. The first part of the book is devotional, and contains texts from the Upanishads on the existence and attributes of God, on the knowledge of God and His worship. This part of the book was thrown off in one sitting, and under one spell of inspiration. My father gave vent to the outpourings of his heart in the words of the Upanishads, and Akshay Kumar Datta took them down in writing

there and then, and in three hours the whole book was composed. The second part consists of moral precepts from Manu, Yagnavalkya, Mahabharat, and other Hindu Scriptures. In an appendix to the book the following were laid down as the cardinal principles of the Brâhmic faith :

1. In the beginning there was naught. The One Supreme alone existed. He created the whole universe.
2. He alone is the God of Truth, Infinite Wisdom, Goodness and Power, Eternal and All-pervading, the One without a second (*Ekamevadvitiyam*).
3. In His worship lies our salvation in this world and in the next.
4. Loving Him and doing that which He loveth constitute His worship.

Besides looking after the Calcutta Samaj, my father helped to establish branches in Midnapur, Burdwan, Dacca, Rangpur, Krishnagar, and several other places. All this work, extending over a period of nearly twelve years, is set forth in the Autobiography.

In the year 1846 my grandfather Dwarkanath Tagore died during his second visit to England. The death was a great blow to my father ; and from a worldly point of view launched him into pecuniary troubles and embarrassments of no ordinary kind. Not only this, but it seemed as if this event was a heaven-sent ordeal, meant to test his spiritual strength in the face of opposition and persecution which arose from an unexpected quarter. It all happened in this

way. When the time came for the performance of the funeral obsequies (Shraddha), my father, as the eldest son, had to take a leading part in the ceremony. But all our domestic ceremonies had become interwoven with idolatrous symbols. What was to be done? The Brâhmic Covenant imposed upon him the duty of discountenancing all idolatrous rites. Great pressure, however, was brought to bear on him in connection with his father's obsequies. Raja Radhakanta Dev's advice was that he should "perform the Shraddha strictly in accordance with the prescribed ritual." But the Maharshi was firm. "I have embraced Brâhmaism," he said, "I cannot do any thing which is in conflict with the vow I have taken. But you may rest assured that I shall do nothing which is not sanctioned by our highest authorities." "No, no," said the Raja, "that won't do. That would be against custom. Do as I say, and all will go well." My father took counsel with his brother Girindranath. But my uncle Girindra was for a compromise. "If we go against custom," he pointed out, "our own kith and kin will desert us." My father was thus left all alone, but he stood firm and triumphed. He refused to take part in any rites which seemed to him idolatrous, and performed the Shraddha according to a form which he had himself prepared for the occasion, in which had been retained all the prescribed Vedic texts. This measure of reform raised a storm of

opposition from his orthodox relatives and friends, and created a permanent breach in the family. This was a serious loss, but the gain was a great deal more in comparison. My father writes :

> My friends and relatives forsook me, but my God took me up with His blessings. My conscience was satisfied at the triumph of the Right. What more could I want ?

My grandfather, Dwarkanath Tagore, died deeply involved in debt. At the time of his death it was found that his liabilities amounted to about a crore of rupees (over £666,000) while his assets were only 43 lakhs (less than £300,000). To maintain his princely state, Dwarkanath Tagore had apparently contracted heavy debts in the name of his firm, taking care at the same time to secure a portion of his property, in the shape of a trust, for the benefit of his family. The manager of the firm, Mr. D. M. Gordon, convened a meeting of the creditors, and informed them that the proprietors of the firm were prepared to make over to them all their property, excepting only the trust property which no one could touch. The creditors themselves, when the proposal was made, seemed inclined to accept it ; but it did not commend itself to my father's sense of justice. He held a brief consultation with his brother, and astonished every one by declaring that they would not avail themselves of the protection afforded by the trust, but would place everything unreservedly in the hands

of their creditors, till all their heavy liabilities were liquidated. The creditors were deeply moved, and one of them, it is recorded, shed tears at the meeting. An arrangement was come to, by which the creditors took charge of the property, and allowed the bereaved sons a subsistence allowance of Rs. 25,000 (about £1600) per annum. My father felt supremely happy in the consciousness of having dealt justly by his creditors, and as he went home he remarked to his brother Girindra that they had performed a *Vishvajit Yajna*[1] by giving away everything they possessed. My father writes :

> What I had desired came to pass. I wanted to renounce the world, and the world left me of its own accord. What a singular coincidence! I had prayed to my God, "I desire nothing but Thee," and the Lord in His mercy granted my prayer. He took away everything from me, and revealed Himself unto me. My heart's desire was fulfilled to the letter.

The creditors, however, did not long continue to hold the property. They were so convinced of my father's honest intentions, that in two years they relinquished the estate to his management, and accordingly he resumed its charge. It took years and years for him to pay off the compounded debts, but by means of judicious management and exemplary self-denial he eventually succeeded in doing so to the last farthing. It was not only in the

[1] A ceremony of public renunciation of all worldly goods.

matter of his father's debts that he was scrupulous. Dwarkanath Tagore had been profuse in his charities, and some liberal promises of pecuniary assistance remained unfulfilled at his death. My father took upon himself the discharge of all such obligations, and in one instance, in the case of a promise of a lakh of rupees (£6666) made to the District Charitable Society of Calcutta, it is said that he paid not only the full donation, but interest thereon from the date on which it had been promised.

Ever since embracing the Brâhmic faith, my father had travelled a good deal. He made it a rule to set out on tour every year when the Durga Puja festival came round, with a view to keep himself aloof from the idolatrous ceremonies which were still adhered to and practised in his domestic circle, and which he had no power to abolish. In this way he travelled over various parts of India. Leaving out of account the innumerable places he visited in Bengal, the names of Lahore, Multan, Amritsar, and Rangoon may be mentioned among the various places to which he went, preaching and proclaiming the Brâhma doctrine, and establishing Samajes[1] where practicable. In 1856 he for the first time set foot on the Himalayas, and there he heard the Call which was definitely to determine his future course. He spent a year and a half among the mountains in the vicinity of the Simla

[1] Places for public worship.

Hills, absorbed in intense study and contemplation, and returned to Calcutta shortly after the Sepoy Mutiny, a regenerated soul, full of ardour and enthusiasm, to propagate the holy religion he had found. It was then that he poured forth his inspired utterances in a series of sermons, delivered extempore from the pulpit, which made a most profound impression upon the congregation. The sermons were taken down in writing by myself and others, and eventually published in a book entitled *The Brâhma Dharma Vyâkhyan*, or *Exposition of the Brâhma Dharma*.[1]

The Autobiography breaks off at the time when my father resumed his work in the Brâhma-Samaj, on his return from the Himalayas. Indeed, the last chapter takes us little beyond the threshold of his career as a religious reformer. The early 'fifties were not an eventful period either in my father's life or in the history of the Brâhma-Samaj. They were devoted to the work of quiet construction and consolidation. The second period may be said to commence with the year 1859, shortly after my father's return from Simla, when an event occurred which was destined to work a great revolution in the Samaj. This was the coming of Keshab Chandra Sen into the ranks of the Brâhma brotherhood. The immediate cause of Keshab's acquaintance with my father was his anxiety to take the Maharshi's

[1] See Appendix A.

advice as to the propriety of taking the *mantra* from his family guru[1] in accordance with the time-honoured custom of his forefathers. I remember very well taking him to my father; and the question propounded was—would he be justified in conforming to that custom? This question, after some discussion, was decided in the negative. This and subsequent acts of nonconformity on the part of Keshab led to a serious rupture between him and the elders of his family. Matters came to such a pass that Keshab and his wife were compelled to leave their home and take shelter in our family house for some time (1862).

My father was much struck by the earnestness and ability of young Keshab, and at once accepted him as a friend and coadjutor. A deep and abiding attachment sprang up between them. "The mature man of fifty joined himself to the eager youth of twenty-three, and they both agreed to work with a cheerfulness and enthusiasm which none had experienced before." Thenceforth they jointly began to plan and adopt several important measures for the improvement of the Samaj; the most noteworthy being the establishing of the Brâhma Vidyâlaya, a Theological Institute where both of them gave lectures on religious subjects in Bengali and English. In 1862 my father installed Keshab as

[1] The *guru* is the spiritual preceptor who gives to his disciple a *mantra* or text on which to meditate.

Achârya[1] of the Samaj, and conferred on him the title of Brâhmânanda. From that time my father was known as the Pradhân Achârya (chief minister) of the Samaj.

But this harmony was not to last. The temperaments of the two men differed too widely to allow of a permanent co-operation. My father, though an uncompromising enemy of idolatrous worship, was essentially conservative in his instincts. While endeavouring to revive the lofty Theism of the Upanishads, he was not prepared for measures calculated, as it seemed, to subvert the social fabric of modern Hinduism. He cherished an ideal differing greatly from that of the bulk of the educated young men of his day. To him ancient India was the cradle of all that was pure in morals and religion. He was a man more deeply imbued than any one in modern times with the genuine spirit of the ancient Rishis. It is singular that the one field of religious inspiration which was foreign to him was the Hebrew Scriptures. He was never known to quote the Bible, nor do we find any allusion to Christ or His teachings in his sermons. For him the Indian Scriptures sufficed. His religion was Indian in origin and expression, it was Indian in ideas and in spirit. The late Rev. Pratap Chandra Mozumdar wrote in a recent article :

To the most straitlaced evangelical the Protestant Bible

[1] Minister.

had no greater authority and inspiration than the Upanishads had for Maharshi Devendranath. They nourished and deepened every faculty in him.

The Brahma of the Upanishads was the God of his worship, and it was from Brahma that the Samaj derived its name. The direct communion of the human soul with the Supreme Spirit was the most salient point of his teachings. No gurus or prophets stand between our soul and our God. We see Him face to face, and hear His voice in the innermost depths of our conscience. The Divinity of Jesus Christ, Christ the only Mediator and Saviour of mankind, such doctrines were repugnant to his austere Monotheism. As regards social reformation, he was for adopting a slow and cautious policy, a policy of conciliation ; he was in favour of leaving such reforms as were really required to the influence of time, and to the effect of the teachings of a pure religion.

Keshab, on the other hand, was a reformer of a more pronounced type. Though for many years he had sat at the feet of the Maharshi, a time came when he could no longer pull together with his conservatism. Intermarriage, remarriage of widows, abolition of caste distinctions, all these questions of radical reform were started and discussed. On these questions, it would seem, my father yielded as far as his conservatism would permit, but when he thought that Keshab's disciples were going too far he drew

back in alarm. Then, again, there were other differences between the two. My father, as I have said, was intensely national in his religious ideal, whereas Keshab's outlook was more cosmopolitan. While not exactly denationalised, he was better fitted by his training and education to assimilate the ideas and civilisation of the West. Indeed, his whole character was moulded by Western culture and Christian influences. He drew much of his spiritual store from the New Testament, and habitually spoke of Jesus Christ in a manner which made his missionary friends cling to the hope of his conversion to their faith. In *Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia*, a lecture delivered in April 1865, Keshab says :

> I cherish the profoundest reverence for the character of Jesus, and the lofty ideal of moral truth which he taught and lived. In Christ we see not only the exaltedness of humanity, but also the grandeur of which Asiatic nature is susceptible. To us Asiatics, therefore, Christ is doubly interesting, and his religion is entitled to our peculiar regard. And thus in Christ, Europe and Asia, the East and the West, may learn to find harmony and unity.

These utterances, though of a date subsequent to the separation, are sufficient to show his attitude towards Christianity, in marked contrast to my father's. A struggle between two such temperaments and such opposite ideals was bound to end in disruption, and matters soon came to a crisis.

The immediate cause of the rupture is generally

believed to have been the objection raised by Keshab to the wearing of the sacred thread by those who conducted Divine Service in the Brâhma-Samaj. At first my father was inclined to give in, and even went so far as actually to set up two of Keshab's friends, who had discarded their Brahminical thread, as Achâryas, in the place of the old ministers who had refused to comply with the proposed reform. But on second thoughts, reflecting perhaps on what was due to the old ministers who had suffered so much for the Samaj, and being desirous of retaining and harmonising the conservative and progressive elements in the Samaj, he changed his mind, and the old thread-bearing Brâhmas were replaced as ministers.

The rupture between the two parties was further widened by an intermarriage between two persons of different castes, solemnised by Keshab in 1863 ; this was a reform of a radical character which my father was not prepared to adopt, in opposition to the sentiments of the entire Hindu community. For some time proposals for separate services in the same church were discussed, but with no result. A complete severance seemed to be the only solution. Some of the young men broke away, but Keshab held on for some time longer. The mutual love between the Pradhân Achârya and Brâhmânanda delayed the catastrophe. But as no compromise was possible between the two separation was inevitable.

In February 1865 Keshab finally withdrew from the parent church; in the following year he sent a parting address to my father, and established the "Brâhma-Samaj of India." On the secession of Keshab's party, my father gave his own church the name of "Adi Brâhma-Samaj."

With this important phase in the history of the Samaj the Autobiography does not deal. It would no doubt have been of great interest had it extended to the close of the period culminating in the schism just described, fully disclosing the causes that led to it, and laying bare the inner workings of my father's mind at the time of the occurrence. But though my father left it incomplete, the letters that passed between the two leaders at the time, and those that were exchanged at the subsequent attempts to heal up the differences between the two churches, throw a flood of light on the controversy. And these, I think, fully bear out my view of the situation as expressed above. My father's work has throughout been constructive and not destructive. He was a builder-up, not a puller-down. He was, I repeat, not in favour of any revolutionary measures of reform which might have the effect of permanently alienating the general body of his countrymen from the Brâhma-Samaj, and thus operate as a bar to the diffusion and acceptance of pure monotheism in the country.[1] The substitution of theistic worship for

[1] See Appendix B.

the prevailing idolatry was to his mind a consummation more devoutly to be wished than mere change of social institution or usage. How strongly he felt this may be gathered from his writings. In a paper called *My Twenty-five Years' Experience of the Brâhma-Samaj* he says :

> The practice of taking the Brâhmic Covenant was instituted on the 7th Pausha, Shaka 1765 (1843). On that day I took the covenant before Ramchandra Vidyávagish, the Achârya of the Samaj. From that time I used to travel out every year, when the Durga Puja was celebrated at my house. During my travels, how often have I prayed to my God with tears in my eyes for the day when idolatrous ceremonies would be abolished from our house, and the adoration of the Infinite commence in their stead.

Some time after Keshab with his disciples had severed his connection with the parent Samaj, he determined to convene a meeting for the purpose of considering the best means for cementing his party into a compact religious association. This meeting was held in November 1866, at the Metropolitan College House in Chitpur Road. The meeting was numerously attended. It was opened by divine service, which included some hymns, and the recital of Scriptural texts, extracted from the writings of Christians, Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsees, and Chinese. This extraordinary innovation was introduced to show the universal and catholic character of the proposed church, as will appear from the

resolutions that were unanimously carried at the meeting.

These are :

1. That an Association be established under the title of "Brâhma-Samaj of India."
2. That this Association be bound to preserve the purity and universality of its religion.
3. That people of both sexes, believing in the fundamental principles of Brâhmaism, shall be admissible as members.
4. That mottoes and maxims, agreeing with the principles of Brâhmaism, be gleaned and published from the religious writings of all nations.
5. That a vote of thanks be given to Devendranath Tagore for his zeal and labour in promoting the progress of the religion.

On the 23rd January (11th Magha) 1868, the day on which the 38th annual festival of the Adi Brâhma-Samaj was celebrated, the foundation-stone of the Brâhma-Samaj of India was laid, and the erection of the Brâhma Mandir[1] in Machua Bazar Street was completed in August 1869; since then the Samaj founded by Keshab has met there. Thus, after a series of struggles which it is needless to detail, Keshab's efforts towards consolidating and bringing together the seceding party in one body were crowned with success. But while working for his own church with indefatigable zeal and unflinching devotion, Keshab, it is a pleasure to note, was nowise

[1] Temple of worship.

unmindful of the debt of gratitude he owed to the Adi Samaj, and was always anxious to establish a *modus vivendi* between the two churches. He even drew up a scheme with that object, and submitted it to my father for his approval, but somehow all his efforts in that direction fell through. Nevertheless, he continued to cherish the utmost reverence and regard for my father, and the latter treated him with paternal affection to the last. The schism in the Brâhma-Samaj made no difference in their mutual friendly and cordial relations.

The foundation of the new Church of India gave an impetus to much missionary enterprise, and Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, one of the most devoted and prominent of Keshab's followers, was selected for mission work in Southern India, where, through his exertions, a Brâhma-Samaj was established in the city of Madras. Later on, Pratap Chandra carried the banner of theism across the Atlantic, and made his influence felt chiefly amongst our Unitarian brethren in the West, and succeeded in enlisting their sympathies and co-operation in our cause. Keshab himself went about preaching the religion in Bombay and Northern India. Aghornath Gupta, another missionary, traversed with much difficulty the inaccessible forests of Assam, and preached with success among its rude and superstitious people.

Having established his church on a firm footing, Keshab, like the founder of the Brâhma-Samaj,

turned his thoughts towards the West, and in the beginning of 1870 set sail for England, where he was enthusiastically received. His stay in England was "a constant triumph." Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, knowing how great a power for good he wielded in India, graciously granted him a private audience, which left an indelible impression on his heart. His winning manners, persuasive eloquence, and brilliant intellectual attainments created a highly favourable impression on the British public, and he was afforded every opportunity of profiting by close personal intercourse with some of the most celebrated scholars and divines of England. He was, moreover, fortunate in the friendship and intimacy of that eminent Sanskrit scholar, Professor Max Müller, who gives us an appreciative sketch of the life and work of Keshab in his *Biographical Essays*.

"On Keshab's return to India," says Miss Collet in her history of the Brâhma-Samaj, "he immediately began to put in practice some of the hints he had gathered in England, and started what he called 'The Indian Reform Association'; a body of which the nucleus was taken from his own church, but which was declared to be open to all classes, races, and creeds, who would join to promote the social and moral reformation of the people of India."

The Association was divided into five branches, viz. Female Improvement, Education, Cheap Literature, Temperance, and Charity. The first section commenced by opening a Female Normal

and Adult School for ladies who wished to be instructed themselves, or to be trained for teaching others. The Normal School has long been closed, but Keshab's Victoria Institution for Women, with a girls' school attached to it, after various vicissitudes, exists to the present day. It was at this time that Keshab and his followers established their Boarding House, called the Bhârat Asram. Industrial schools, night schools, and other charitable experiments followed, but in the attempt to do so much at once, failure and disappointment were inevitable. The most important step in Keshab's career was the part taken by him in ascertaining from expert medical opinion the proper and minimum age for the marriage of girls, and legalising Brâhma marriages by getting Act III. of 1872 passed.

Keshab Chandra would now seem to have attained the summit of his ambition. His fondest expectations were realised. He had surrounded himself with a band of devoted followers, some of whom worshipped him as an Avatar[1] with a blind unreasoning faith. Everything seemed to smile upon his path, and a wide field of usefulness and reform lay open before him, when, all of a sudden, a black cloud showed itself on the horizon. This was the marriage of his daughter with the Maharaja of Kuchbehar. I do not propose to enter here upon the merits of the bitter controversy that ensued ; suffice

[1] Incarnation of the Deity.

it to say that a considerable body of his followers strongly disapproved of the step he had thought fit to take, and that this marriage was the occasion of a further schism in the Samaj. On Thursday, the 22nd March 1878, a large meeting of the members of the Brâhma-Samaj of India was called at the Brâhma Mandir, in which it was agreed that Babu Keshab Chandra Sen, the minister of the Mandir, by countenancing the premature marriage of his daughter, and by allowing idolatrous rites to be observed in connection with that marriage, had violated the principles accepted by himself and the Brâhma-Samaj of India. It was therefore resolved that "he was not fit to continue in the office of minister." The outcome of the opposition was the formation of a third branch, known as the Sâdhâran Brâhma-Samaj. This section of the Samaj counts among its members such distinguished men as Ananda Mohan Bose, K. G. Gupta, Pandit Shiva Nath Shastri, Dr. P. K. Ray, Sasipada Banerjee, and others.

The name "Sâdhâran" Samaj is significant, as showing that it claims to have advanced from a church government of a theocratic type to a church government on democratic principles.

The last stage of Keshab's theological development is that represented by the formulation of the New Dispensation. In 1881, Keshab proclaimed this Dispensation, which, besides a number of rites and ceremonies adopted from our own and other systems

of religion, emphasises the fundamental unity of all religions. Its creed, as propounded by its founder, is shortly :

The Harmony of all Scriptures and all Saints and all sects.

The Harmony of Reason and Faith, of devotion and duty, of Yoga and Bhakti.

The Church of the One Supreme. No idolatry.

The Church of Universal Brotherhood. No caste or sectarianism.

The following is an extract from the Creed of the new dispensation as set forth in the *Nava-samhitâ* :

I accept and revere the Scriptures so far as they are records of the wisdom and devotion and piety of inspired geniuses, and the dealings of God's providence in the salvation of nations, of which records the spirit is God's, but the letter man's.

I accept and revere the world's prophets and saints, as far as they embody and reflect the different elements of the divine character, and set forth the higher ideals of life for the instruction and sanctification of the world.

My creed is the science of God which enlighteneth all. My gospel is the love of God which saveth all. My heaven is life in God which is accessible to all. My church is that invisible kingdom of God, in which is all truth, all love, all holiness.

The schism in the Brâhma-Samaj is deplored by some as tending to weaken the cause of theism in India, but it may be construed as a happy event in another light. Professor Max Müller takes a

brighter and more hopeful view of the separation, as will appear from the following passage :

If we call the separation of the Brâhma-Samaj of India from the old Adi Brâhma-Samaj, and again the separation of the Sâdhâran Samaj from the Brâhma-Samaj of India, a schism, we seem to condemn by the very word we use. But to my mind these three societies seem like three branches of the one vigorous tree, the tree that was planted by Rammohan Roy. In different ways they all serve the same purpose ; they are all doing, I believe, unmixed good, in helping to realise the dream of a new religion for India it may be for the whole world—a religion free from many corruptions of the past, call them idolatry, or caste, or verbal inspiration, or priestcraft ; and firmly founded on a belief in the One God, the same in the Vedas, the same in the Old, the same in the New Testament, the same in the Koran, the same also in the hearts of those who have no longer Vedas or Upanishads or any sacred Books whatever between themselves and their God. The stream is small as yet, but it is a living stream. It may vanish for a time, it may change its name and follow new paths of which as yet we have no idea. But if there is ever to be a new religion in India, it will, I believe, owe its very life-blood to the large heart of Rammohan Roy and his worthy disciples, Devendranath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen.[1]

After Keshab's separation, my father practically retired from active work in the Samaj. He had trained up ministers to conduct the service of his own Adi Samaj, and appointed a committee for the management of its affairs. He continued, however, to keep a close supervision over the affairs of the

[1] *Biographical Essays* (1884), p. 83.

Samaj, and everything was done with his knowledge and under his advice and guidance to the last. For himself, he had now another call. That call was to withdraw himself from the din and bustle of the world, and spend his days in communion with his God. "It was to live before the world," as one has well said, "in it and yet out of it, the life of a true Rishi, and pour forth over all who came into his presence the genial radiance of a man of God. Henceforth he became the common patriarch of all the Samajes, and a Maharshi for all Hindus."

At Bolpur, in the Birbhum District, my father had built many years before a sort of retreat, which he called the "Shanti Niketan," or the "Abode of Peace." Here he had a house, a garden, a mandir,[1] and a library, and all conveniences for retirement and study. Here in his younger days he often used to spend his time in meditation and prayer with his favourite disciples, and entertain pilgrims that visited the Hermitage. The Shanti Niketan, with all its grounds and appurtenances, has been dedicated to the public for the purposes of theistic worship by a trust deed, and a Mela[2] is held there on the 7th Pausha every year.

From the time of his retirement to his death several years elapsed. Portions of this period were spent in travel,[3] in the Himalayas, in Chinsura by

[1] Place of worship, temple. [2] Festival.
[3] Bombay, Kashmir, and Hongkong were among the places visited.

the bank of the Ganges, and lastly in Calcutta. For some time my father lived in a separate house in Park Street, but he finally settled down in his ancestral home at Jorasanko.

In the latter part of 1902 the Maharshi's health gave way, and after this he was constantly ailing. During the last few months his life was often despaired of, but his wonderful constitution repeatedly conquered death. During his last days, a favourite stanza of Hafiz was always on his lips :

> The bell is tolling. I have heard the call, and am ready to depart with all my luggage.

At last he heard the call, and on Thursday the 19th January 1905, at 1.55 P.M., quietly passed away at his family residence in Calcutta ; conscious almost till the last moment, and surrounded by his sorrowing children and grandchildren.

My late lamented friend, Ananda Mohan Bose, in a letter written on receipt of the news of his death, says of him :

> Son of Dwarkanath Tagore, and the first Secretary, I believe, of the British Indian Association, he might have been a Maharaja long before this. But he chose the better part. Maharajas die but Maharshis live—live in the grateful hearts of unborn generations.

In conclusion, I wish to advert to one or two other matters bearing on the history and progress of the Brâhma-Samaj, which have not found a place in the foregoing sketch.

The most important reform that was introduced after my father returned from the Hills was the *Anushthân Paddhati*, or the Brâhmic Ritual, intended to regulate the observance of the domestic rites and ceremonies obtaining among our people at the present day.

For many years the Brâhma Dharma, in spite of the enthusiasm of its first adherents, had continued to be little more than a cold intellectual creed; its effect on practical life was almost nil. The Brâhmic Covenant, binding every Brâhma to renounce worship through idolatrous symbols, was, in the majority of cases, honoured more in the breach than in the observance. Many a Brâhma had thus to live a life of unfaithfulness, being forced to conform to social observances which his conscience did not approve of. One exception to this was the performance by the Maharshi of his father's Shraddha on monotheistic principles as related above. The second was the performance of the wedding ceremony of his daughter Sukumari, my second sister, without any idolatrous rites in 1861, after his return from Simla. This innovation may justly be said to have ushered a new era into the history of the Brâhma-Samaj. Our relatives were greatly embittered at this fresh instance of nonconformity; the legality of the modified ceremonial was, moreover, not altogether free from doubt. But in the face of these discouragements the reformed marriage was celebrated, amidst great

enthusiasm and rejoicing on the part of the Brâhma community.

These reformed practices, however, were confined to one or two Brâhma families, and it was necessary to do something to bring them into use among the general Brâhma community. Accordingly my father set to work to prepare a complete Ritual embodying all the Hindu domestic ceremonies in the original Vedic, non-idolatrous form. Every important phase of Hindu social life has its own sacraments. Of the twelve Sanskars or sacramental rites enjoined by Grihya Sutras, Manu, and other authorities, beginning with Garbhadhan or the ceremony of conception, and ending in Vivaha or marriage, the most important are Upanayan, or investiture with the sacred thread, and Marriage. The investiture is looked upon, like the Christian rite of baptism, as a spiritual second birth or regeneration. Marriage is the twelfth and the last Sanskar. When the Brâhmachari, or the student, has finished his studies, he passes on to the second life-stage (Asrama), marries, and becomes a householder (Grihasta). Marriage is a religious duty incumbent upon all. Besides these Sanskars, there is the Antyeshti or funeral ceremony, and Shraddha, consisting of homage paid to, and prayers for, the dead.

In the Book of Brâhmic Ritual, it will be observed that such of the non-Vedic portions of the orthodox ritual as can be kept consistently with theistic

principles, have also been retained; with such modifications as are warranted by the exigencies of modern life.

In the Upanayan, or the thread ceremony, for instance, the investiture with the thread, the begging of alms, the Brâhmachari, or student, receiving instructions from the guru—these and such other rites as are the essential part of the ceremony, have all been retained. After the investiture, the student is initiated into the holy Gayatri,[1] a Vedic *mantra* handed down to us from hoary antiquity; and the duties of student-life are duly impressed upon him.

As regards marriage, the only important departure from the existing practice which distinguishes the new Ritual from the old, is the omission of the Shaligram and the Homa ceremony, which constitute a marked feature in ordinary Hindu marriages. The ceremony of *Kanyadan* or giving away the bride, the rite of *Saptapadi* or walking of seven steps together by the married couple, have all been left intact in the reformed Ritual, nor does it contravene any of the provisions of the Hindu law as to the rules of consanguinity, the prohibition of *Sagotra* (inter-clan) and inter-caste marriages.

The Brâhmas of the Adi Samaj had for some time been endeavouring to procure a formal act of legisla-

[1] "Let us contemplate the adorable glory of Savitri (Vivifier), the Heavenly God. May He enlighten our thoughts."

tion to legalise Brâhma marriages; but on further consideration they abandoned the attempt as useless, being advised that marriages solemnised in accordance with the form of the Adi Brâhma-Samaj were quite as valid as marriages performed under a legislative enactment.

When, therefore, at the instance of Keshab Chandra Sen, Government wanted to pass a marriage law applicable to the whole of the Brâhma community, requiring parties desirous to marry to appear before a registrar of Brâhma marriages and get their marriage registered by him, the members of the Adi Samaj, deeming themselves as much Hindu as the rest of the community, applied to Government for exemption from the proposed Act. Owing to their strenuous opposition, the Marriage Act of 1872 was passed, in its present form, for the benefit of those who did not profess any recognised form of religion. The passing of the Marriage Act of 1872 was hailed as a signal triumph by Keshab and his party, but the members of the Adi Samaj did not share in this feeling, inasmuch as they were unaffected by its provisions. At the present day, all sections of the Brâhma-Samaj, with the exception of the Adi Samaj, avail themselves of the Act by getting their marriages registered, after making the negative declaration as to religion required by the Act; while the Adi Samaj follows a ritual of its own, without registration. My father was strongly opposed to registration as

required by the Act, and never doubted the validity of marriages solemnised in the presence of God.

A few years before my father's death, he had completed his Autobiography ; and when finished, he entrusted it to his favourite disciple Priyanath Shastri for publication, conferring upon him the full benefits of its copyright. The right of translation and publication in other than the original Bengali language was given to my brother Rabindranath and myself, jointly. Although he had originally objected to its publication during his lifetime, he was induced upon reconsideration to withdraw the objection, and the book was published shortly before his death, with certain supplementary letters in the form of an Appendix.

The Autobiography contains no stirring adventures, or sensational incidents of any kind. Its value consists in its being a record of the spiritual struggle of a noble soul against early associations, conventionality, and family ties—the struggle of a soul striving to rise from empty idolatrous ceremonial to the true worship of the One living God ; the Brahma of the Upanishads, the Power which operates in the universe, creating, sustaining, and destroying, the Eternal Spirit immanent in the world without and in the soul of man. The record, in fine, is one of an illumined life struggling towards more light, and shedding its brilliance on all around. However much the convincing diction of the original may

have suffered in translation, I venture to hope that this authentic and first-hand testimony of the direct vision of God may prove helpful and instructive to the devotee and the philosopher alike.

I have been helped in the work of translation by my daughter, Indira Devi, who has tried to make it as faithful and literal as possible, regard being had to the divergence of Western and Eastern modes of thought.

SATYENDRANATH TAGORE.

Baliganj, Calcutta,
20th October 1908.

CHAPTER I

My grandmother was very fond of me. To me, also, she was all in all during the days of my childhood. My sleeping, sitting, eating, all were at her side. Whenever she went to Kalighat[1] I used to accompany her. I cried bitterly when she went to Jagannath Kshetra[2] and Brindaban[3] leaving me behind. She was a deeply religious woman. Every day she used to bathe in the Ganges very early in the morning; and every day she used to weave garlands of flowers with her own hands for the *Shaligram*.[4] Sometimes she used to take a vow of solar adoration, giving offerings to the sun from sunrise to sunset. On these occasions I also used to be with her on the terrace in the sun; and constantly hearing the *mantras* (texts) of the sun-worship repeated, they became quite familiar to me.

[1] The temple of Kali in Calcutta.

[2] The famous temple of Jagannath in Puri.

[3] A famous place of pilgrimage.

[4] A round black stone, symbol of Vishnu, and used in the daily family worship.

I salute the bringer of day, red as the Java flower :
Radiant son of Kashyapa,
Enemy of Darkness,
Destroyer of all sins.

At other times Didima[1] used to hold a *Haribasar*[2] festival, and the whole night there was *Katha* and *Kirtan*,[3] the noise of which would not let us sleep.

She used to look after the whole household, and do much of the work with her own hands. Owing to her skill in housekeeping, all domestic concerns worked smoothly under her guidance. After everybody had taken their meals, she would eat food cooked by herself; I too had a share in her *havishyanna*.[4] And this *prasad*[5] of hers was more to my taste than the food prepared for myself. She was as lovely in appearance as she was skilled in her work, and steadfast in her religious faith. But she had no liking for the frequent visits of the *Ma-Gosain*.[6] There was a certain freedom of mind in her, together with her blind faith in religion. I used to accompany her to our old family house to see *Gopinath Thakur*.[7] But I did not like to leave her and go to the outer apartments. I would sit in her

[1] Grandmother.

[2] A Vaishnavite festival, in which a whole day and night is spent in adoration of God.

[3] Recitations and religious songs.

[4] A simple diet of rice and vegetables, boiled together in one pot and eaten with clarified butter and salt. This is prescribed for those who intend to live a spiritual life.

[5] Food, sanctified by having been previously offered to the gods or some venerated person.

[6] Priestess of the Vaishnavites.

[7] The family idol.

lap and watch everything, quietly, from the window. Now my Didima is no more. But after how long, and after how much seeking, have I now found the Didima that is hers also ; and, seated on Her lap, am watching the pageant of this world.

Some days before her death Didima said to me, "I will give all I have to you, and nobody else." Shortly after this she gave me the key of her box. I opened it and found some rupees and gold *mohurs*, whereupon I went about telling every one I had got *mudi-mudki*.[1] In the year 1757 Shaka (1242 B.S.), when Didima was on her death-bed, my father had gone on a journey to Allahabad. The *vaidya*[2] came and said that the patient should not be kept in the house any longer ; so they brought my grandmother out into the open, in order to take her to the banks of the Ganges.[3] But Didima still wanted to live ; she did not wish to go to the Ganges. She said, "If Dwarkanath had been at home, you would never have been able to carry me away." But they did not listen to her, and proceeded with her to the river-side. She said, "As you are taking me to the Ganges against my wish, so will I too give you great trouble ; I am not going to die soon." She was kept in a tiled shed on the banks of the Ganges,

[1] Rice parched and rice sweetened with treacle—hence white and gold coloured. [2] Physician.

[3] To die on the banks of the sacred Ganges was desired by the religious. Hence the practice of taking a person whose last moments had come to the banks of the Ganges.

where she remained living for three nights. During this time I was always there with her, by the river.

On the night before Didima's death I was sitting at Nimtola Ghat[1] on a coarse mat near the shed. It was the night of the full moon ; the moon had risen, the burning ground was near. They were singing the Holy Name to Didima :

Will such a day ever come, that while uttering the name of Hari, life will leave me ?[2]

The sounds reached my ears faintly, borne on the night-wind ; at this opportune moment a strange sense of the unreality of all things suddenly entered my mind. I was as if no longer the same man. A strong aversion to wealth arose within me. The coarse bamboo-mat on which I sat seemed to be my fitting seat, carpets and costly spreadings seemed hateful, in my mind was awakened a joy unfelt before. I was then eighteen years old.

[1] The principal cremating ground in Calcutta.

[2] "Hari," one of the names of the Deity regarded in His personal aspect : somewhat equivalent to the Christian "Lord."

CHAPTER II

Up to this time I had been plunged in a life of luxury and pleasure. I had never sought after spiritual truths. What was religion? What was God? I knew nothing, had learnt nothing. My mind could scarcely contain the unworldly joy, so simple and natural, which I experienced at the burning-ghat. Language is weak in every way: how can I make others understand the joy I felt? It was a spontaneous delight, to which nobody can attain by argument or logic. God Himself seeks for the opportunity of pouring it out. He had vouchsafed it unto me in the fulness of time. Who says there is no God? This is proof enough of His existence. I was not prepared for it; whence then did I receive this joy?

With this sense of joy and renunciation, I returned home at midnight. That night I could not sleep. It was this blissful state of mind that kept me awake. Throughout the night my heart was suffused with a moonlight radiance of joy. At day-break I went again to the river-side to see Didima.

She was then drawing her last breaths. They had carried her into the water of the Ganges, and were fervently crying aloud, "*Ganga Narayan Brahma.*" Didima breathed her last. I drew near and saw that her hand was placed on her breast, with the fourth finger pointing upwards. Turning her finger round and round, and crying "Haribol,"[2] she passed into the next world. When I saw this it seemed to me that at the time of death she pointed out to me with uplifted finger, "That is God, and the Hereafter." As Didima had been my friend in this life, so was she the guide to the next.

Her Shraddha ceremony[3] was celebrated with great pomp. Anointing ourselves with oil and turmeric, we went and planted the *vrisha kashthá*[4] of the Shraddha on the banks of the Ganges. These few days passed in a whirl of excitement and confusion. Then I tried to recover the joy of the night previous to Didima's death. But I never got it back. At this time the state of my mind was one of continued despondency and indifference to the world. On that night the indifference had been coupled with delight. Now, in the absence of that delight, a deep gloom settled on my mind. I longed for a repetition of that ecstatic feeling. I lost all interest in everything else.

There is a story in the Bhagavata, which might

[1] An invocation of the Deity. [2] Take all the name of Hari!
[3] Funeral. [4] A sacrificial post with a figure of a bull at the top.

furnish a parallel to my case. Narada is talking about himself thus to Vedavyasa.[1] "In my former birth I was the son of a certain Rishi's maidservant. During the rainy season, many holy people used to come and seek refuge in that Rishi's hermitage. I used to minister to their wants. In course of time divine wisdom dawned upon me, and my mind was filled with a single-hearted devotion to Hari. Then when those holy men were about to leave the hermitage they, in the goodness of their heart, taught me the mysteries of philosophy, which enabled me to understand clearly the glory of Hari. My mother was the Rishi's maidservant and I was her only son. It was only for her sake that I could not leave the Rishi's *asrama*. One night she went out to milk the cows. On the way she was bitten by a black serpent that she had trod on, and she died. But I looked upon this event as a great opportunity for the fulfilment of my desire, and alone I entered a huge and terrible forest, shrill with the voice of cicadas. In the course of my wanderings I felt very hungry and thirsty. I relieved my fatigue by drinking and bathing in a pool of water. Then I went and sat underneath an *ashvattha*[2] tree, and according to the teaching of the saints began meditating on the Spirit of God dwelling within the soul. My mind was flooded with emotion, my eyes were filled with tears. All

[1] The Rishi Vyasa (Saint) who collected the Vedas and other Shastras.
[2] The *Ficus religiosus*.

at once I saw the shining vision of Brahma in the lotus core of my heart. A thrill passed through my whole body, I felt a joy beyond all measure. But the next moment I could see Him no more. On losing sight of that beatific vision which destroys all sorrow, I suddenly rose from the ground. A great sadness came over my spirit. Then I tried to see Him again by force of contemplation, but found Him not. I became as one stricken with disease, and would not be comforted. Meanwhile I suddenly heard a voice in the air, 'In this life thou shalt see Me no more. Those whose hearts have not been purified, who have not attained the highest Yoga, cannot see Me. It was only to stimulate thy love that I once appeared before thee.'"

I was exactly in the same position. For want of the joy of that night, my heart was sore distressed. But it was that which awakened my love of God. Only in one point did my case differ from this story of Narada's. His heart had first obtained love and faith by hearing the praise of Hari from the lips of the Rishis, and afterwards he received from them much instruction regarding the knowledge of Brahma. But I had had no opportunity of my love and faith being aroused by any such praises of Hari, nor had any one deigned to impart to me the truths of divine wisdom. The fair winds of luxury and pleasure were blowing all around me day and night. Yet in spite of these adverse cir-

cumstances, God in His mercy gave me the spirit of renunciation, and took away from me my attachment to the world. And then He Who is the source of all joy gave me new life by pouring streams of joy into my mind. This mercy of His is beyond compare. He alone is my Guru. He alone is my Father.

CHAPTER III

One day, after Didima's death, whilst sitting in my *boythakkhana*,[1] I said to those around me, "To-day I have become a *kalpataru*.[2] Whoever will ask of me anything that it is in my power to give, that will I give to him." Nobody else asked me for anything except my cousin Braja Babu, who said, "Give me those two big mirrors, give me those pictures, give me that gold-laced dress suit." I immediately gave him all these. The next day he brought men and took away all the *boythakkhana* things. There were some good pictures and other valuable articles of furniture; he took them all away. In this manner I got rid of all my things. But the grief in my heart remained just the same; nothing could dispel it. I knew not where to turn for solace. Sometimes, lying on a sofa and pondering over problems about God, I used to become so absent-minded that I did not know when I had got up from my couch, and taken my meals, and lain down again. I used to feel as if I

[1] Drawing-room.

[2] The wishing-tree which grants all desires.

had been lying there the whole time. I would go alone to the Botanical Gardens in the middle of the day, whenever I got a chance. It was a very unfrequented, lonely spot. I used to take my seat on a tombstone in the middle of the gardens. Great grief was in my heart. Darkness was all around me. The temptations of the world had ceased, but the sense of God was no nearer; earthly and heavenly happiness were alike withdrawn. Life was dreary, the world was like a graveyard. I found happiness in nothing, peace in nothing. The rays of the midday sun seemed to me black. At that time this song suddenly broke from my lips, "Vain, oh! vain is the light of day; without knowledge all is dark as night." This was my first song. I used to sing it out loud sitting alone on that tombstone.

I then felt a strong desire to learn Sanskrit. From my boyhood I had been fond of Sanskrit. I used carefully to commit to memory the verses of *Chanakya*. Whenever I heard a good *sloka* (verse) I learnt it by heart. There was then in our house a family pundit. His name was Kamalakanta Chudamani, his home Bansberia. Formerly he was attached to the family of Gopimohun Tagore, then he came to us. He was a learned man of strong character. I was then young, and he was very fond of me, whilst I looked up to him with reverence. One day I said to him, "I will read *Mugdhabodha*

Vyakarana[1] with you." He said, "Do, by all means. I will teach it to you." Then I commenced the *Mugdhabodha* with Chudamani, and began learning by heart *ja*, *da*, *ga*, *ba*, *jha*, *dha*, *gha*, *bha*.[2] It was as a means of acquiring the knowledge of Sanskrit that I first threw myself enthusiastically into the study of *Mugdhabodha* with Chudamani. One day he quietly took out a piece of paper with his writing on it, and putting it into my hand, said, "Put your signature to this." "What is this writing?" I asked. On reading it, I found it said I would have to support his son Shyamacharan for life. I signed it then and there. I had a great love and respect for Chudamani, so I put my signature at his request without any hesitation. I gave no thought at the time to what it meant. Shortly afterwards our *sabha pundit*[3] Chudamani died. Then Shyamacharan came to me, with that bit of signed paper, and said, "My father is dead, I am helpless; you will now have to support me. See here, you have already promised to do so." I agreed to this, and from that time Shyamacharan lived with me. He knew some Sanskrit. I asked him where I could find truths regarding the Godhead. "In the Mahabharata,"[4] he answered. Then I began read-

[1] A Sanskrit grammar by Vopadeva.

[2] Letters of the alphabet, as arranged in that grammar.

[3] Family pundit who presides at the assemblies of learned pundits held in the house.

[4] Usually called an epic, but more properly a historical treasure-house of legendary lore and of religious and social thought and observances.

ing the Mahabharata with him. On opening the book, one particular *sloka* struck my eye, which says :

> May you have faith in religion, may you ever be devoted to religion ; religion alone is the friend of him who has entered the next world.
>
> However well you may serve mammon and woman, you can never bring them into subjection, nor will they ever be faithful to you.

On reading this *sloka* of the Mahabharata, I felt greatly inspirited.

I had an idea that in all languages, as in Bengali and English, adjectives preceded nouns. But in Sanskrit I found the noun was here, and the adjective right away over there. It took me some time to master this. I read through a good portion of the Mahabharata. I remember quite well Upamanyu's reverence for his guru in the story of Dhaumya Rishi. Now that voluminous book has become accessible to the reading public through translation, but in those days very few people used to read it in the original. My thirst for spiritual knowledge led me to read a great deal of it.

As on the one hand there were my Sanskrit studies in the search after truth, so on the other hand there was English. I had read numerous English works on philosophy. But with all this, the sense of emptiness of mind remained just the same ; nothing could heal it, my heart was being

oppressed by that gloom of sadness and feeling of unrest. Did subjection to Nature comprise the whole of man's existence? I asked. Then indeed are we undone. The might of this monster is indomitable. Fire, at a touch, reduces everything to ashes. Put out to sea in a vessel, whirlpools will drag you down to the bottom, gales will throw you into dire distress. There is no escape from the clutches of this Nature-fiend. If bowing down to her decree be our end and aim, then indeed are we undone. What can we hope for, whom can we trust? Again I thought, as things are reflected on a photographic plate by the rays of the sun, so are material objects manifested to the mind by the senses; this is what is called knowledge. Is there any other way but this of obtaining knowledge? These were the suggestions that Western philosophy had brought to my mind. To an atheist this is enough, he does not want anything beyond Nature. But how could I rest fully satisfied with this? My endeavour was to obtain God, not through blind faith but by the light of knowledge. And being unsuccessful in this, my mental struggles increased from day to day. Sometimes I thought I could live no longer.

CHAPTER IV

SUDDENLY, as I thought and thought, a flash as of lightning broke through this darkness of despondency. I saw that knowledge of the material world is born of the senses and the objects of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste. But together with this knowledge, I am also enabled to know that I am the knower. Simultaneously with the facts of seeing, touching, smelling, and thinking, I also come to know that it is I who see, touch, smell, and think. With the knowledge of objects comes the knowledge of the subject ; with the knowledge of the body comes the knowledge of the spirit within. It was after a prolonged search for truth that I found this bit of light, as if a ray of sunshine had fallen on a place full of extreme darkness. I now realised that with the knowledge of the outer world we come to know our inner self. After this, the more I thought over it, the more did I recognise the sway of wisdom operating throughout the whole world. For us the sun and moon rise and set at regular intervals, for us the wind and rain are set in motion in the proper

seasons. All these combine to fulfil the one design of preserving our life. Whose design is this? It cannot be the design of matter, it must be the design of mind. Therefore this universe is propelled by the power of an intelligent being.

I saw that the child, as soon as born, drinks at its mother's breast. Who taught it to do this? He alone Who gave it life. Again, who put love into the mother's heart? Who but He that put milk into her breast. He is that God Who knows all our wants, Whose rule the universe obeys. When my mind's eye had opened thus far, the clouds of grief were in a great measure dispelled. I felt somewhat consoled.

One day, while thinking of these things, I suddenly recalled how, long ago, in my early youth, I had once realised the Infinite as manifested in the infinite heavens. Again I turned my gaze towards this infinite sky, studded with innumerable stars and planets, and saw the eternal God, and felt that this glory was His. He is Infinite Wisdom. He from Whom we have derived this limited knowledge of ours, and this body, its receptacle, is Himself without form. He is without body or senses. He did not shape this universe with His hands. By His will alone did He bring it into existence. He is neither the Kali[1] of Kalighat, nor the family Shaligram. Thus was the axe laid at the root of

[1] The image in the temple.

idolatry. In studying the mechanism of creation, we find evidences of the wisdom of the Creator. On looking at the starry sky, we feel that He is infinite. By the help of this slender thread, His attributes became clearer to my mind. I saw that no one could frustrate the will of Him Who is Infinite Wisdom. Whatever He wills comes to pass. We collect all the necessary materials, and then make a thing; He by His will creates all the materials necessary for the making of things. He is not only the maker of the world, but what is more, He is its Creator. All created things are transient, corruptible, changeable, and dependent. The Perfect Wisdom that has created them and is guiding them; that alone is eternal, incorruptible, unchangeable, and self-dependent. That eternal, true and perfect Being is the source of all good, and the object of all worship. After debating in my mind for days and days I made sure of this much; after continuous and strenuous endeavour I arrived at this conclusion. And yet my heart kept trembling. The path of knowledge is beset with difficulties. Who would bear me up, cheer and encourage me along this path? Who would give his assent to the conclusion I had arrived at? Do you know what kind of assent I mean? Like that which I received from a boatman of the Padma.[1]

[1] River Padma; the name given to the main current of the Ganges in Bengali.

I had once been to our Zemindari[1] in Kaligram, and was returning home after a long time. I was in a boat on the Padma. It was then the rainy season. Dark masses of cloud were in the sky, and a strong gale had sprung up. The Padma was in a mighty turmoil; and the boatman, seeing a heavy storm approaching, dared not proceed, and made the boat fast to the shore. Even there the boat could hardly be kept safe from the waves, but I had been away for so long that I was in a hurry to get home. When there was a slight lull in the storm at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, I asked the boatman, "Can you put out the boat now?" He said, "I can, if your honour so commands." "Then let go," I said. But considerable time passed, and yet the boat did not move. Half an hour elapsed; still it showed no signs of leaving. Calling the boatman, I said, "Just now you told me you could start if I so ordered. I have given my orders; why then have you not yet started? The storm has now abated a little, there is no knowing when it may burst upon us again. If we are going, let us start at once." He said, "The old *Dewanji*[2] said to me, 'What are you about, you fool of a boatman? In the first place, don't you see this is the confluence of the Sarda—no signs of the opposite bank are to be seen anywhere? Then again it is the

[1] Landed estates.
[2] The manager of the estates.

sankranti[1] of Shravana.[2] Even by the shore the boat can't keep itself steady against the shock of the waves. And you actually want to cross such a Padma at such a time!' These words of the *Dewanji* frightened me so much that I could not put out." "Start," I said, and he immediately unfastened the boat and put up the sails. One sudden blast of wind drove the boat at once into the midst of the stream. Hundreds of boats were tied to the shore; all the men cried out with one voice, "Don't go now! don't go now!" Then my heart sank within me. What could I do? There was no returning. The boat rushed onward with sails outspread. After going some distance I saw that wave upon wave had swollen up like a wall in front. The boat leapt forward to pierce through it, and I became thoroughly unnerved. At this juncture I saw not very far off a little *dingi*[3] that was coming from the opposite shore, like a *mocha*[4] petal tossed about by the wind and waves. Seeing how bold we were, the boatman cried out encouragingly, "No fear, go ahead!" Who was there to join with me in hearty unison, and buoy me up like this? Such was the nature of the response I wanted. But alas, who would give it me?

[1] The day on which the sun changes its sign in the Zodiac. This is the last day of the month.

[2] Name of the month (July–August).

[3] A small boat.

[4] Canoe-shaped petal of the plantain flower.

CHAPTER V

As soon as I came to understand that God was without form or image, a strong antipathy to idolatry arose in my mind. I remembered Rammohan Roy[1] —I came to my senses. I pledged myself heart and soul to follow in his footsteps.

Since my childhood I had been in touch with Rammohan Roy. I used to attend his school. There were other and better schools, there was the Hindu College. But my father sent me to that school at the instance of Rammohan Roy. The school was situated by the side of the Hedua tank. Nearly every Saturday, when school broke up at 2 o'clock, I used to accompany Ramaprasad Roy[2] to Rammohan Roy's garden-house at Maniktala. On other days too I used to visit him. Sometimes I went and played many mischievous pranks there. I used to pluck the *lichis* and pick the green peas in the garden and eat them in great glee. One day

[1] The great Indian reformer, founder of the Brâhma-Samaj, born in Radhanagar, a village in the Hooghly District (Bengal), in A.D. 1774. Died, 27th September 1833, at Bristol (England).

[2] Son of Rammohan Roy.

Rammohan Roy said, "Brother, why romp about in the sun? Sit down here and eat as many *lichis* as you can." To the gardener he said, "Go and get *lichis* from the trees and bring them here." He immediately brought a plateful of *lichis*. Then Rammohan Roy said, "Eat as many *lichis* as you like." His appearance was calm and dignified. I used to look up to him with great respect and reverence.

There was a swing in the garden, in which Rammohan Roy used to swing by way of exercise. When I went to the garden of an afternoon he used to make me sit in it and swing me himself. After a time he would sit in it himself and say, "Brother, now it is your turn to push."

I was the eldest son of my father. On any ceremonial occasion it was I who had to go from house to house inviting people. It was the time of the Durga Puja[1] in the month of Ashwin.[2] I went to invite Rammohan Roy to this festival, and said, "Rammoni Thakur[3] begs to invite you to attend the Puja for three days." Upon this he said, "Brother, why come to me? Go and ask Radhaprasad." Now after all this lapse of time I understood the purport and meaning of those words. Since then I inwardly resolved that as Rammohan Roy did not take part in any image-

[1] The principal religious festival in Bengal. [2] September–October.
[3] Father of Dwarkanath Tagore.

worship or idolatry, so would I not join in them either. I would not worship any image, I would not bow down before any image, I would not accept an invitation to any idolatrous worship. From that time my mind was fully made up. I little knew then what a fiery ordeal I was to pass through.

I formed a party with my brothers. We all resolved that we would not go to the sanctuary during the Puja, and even if we went none of us would bow down before the image. My father used then to go to the sanctuary in the evening, at the time of the *arati*,[1] so that we too had to go there in deference to him. But when the time came for saluting, and everybody bowed down to the ground, we remained standing; nobody could see whether we performed the obeisance or not.

Whenever I came across idolatrous preachings in any *shastra* I no longer felt any reverence for it. An erroneous impression was then created in my mind that all our *shastras* were full of idolatry, and that it was therefore impossible to extract from them truths pertaining to the formless and changeless Deity. When I was in this depressed state of mind, one day all of a sudden I saw a page from some Sanskrit book flutter past me. Out of curiosity I picked it up, but found I could understand nothing of what

[1] The evening ceremony, conducted with lighted lamps moved round and round the image.

was written on it. I said to Shyamacharan Bhattacharya, who was sitting by me, "I will come home soon, after attending to the business of the Union Bank. In the meantime do you decipher the meaning of the verses on this page, so that you can explain it all to me on my return from office." Saying this I hurried off to the Bank. At that time I had a post in the Union Bank. My youngest uncle, Ramanath Tagore, was the cashier, and I his assistant. I had to stay there from 10 o'clock until the day's work was over. It took us up to 10 o'clock at night to make up the accounts. But on that day, as I was to have the page out of the Sanskrit book explained to me by Shyamacharan Bhattacharya, I could not brook the delay of balancing accounts; so with my uncle's permission I came home early. I hurried up to the *boythakkhana* on the third story, and asked Shyamacharan Bhattacharya to explain to me what was written on the printed page. He said, "I have been trying hard all this time, but cannot make out its meaning." This astonished me. English scholars can understand every book in the English language; why then cannot Sanskrit scholars understand every Sanskrit book? "Who can make it out then?" I asked. He said, "This is what the Brâhma Sabha[1] talks about. Ramchandra Vidyávagish of the Sabha could probably explain it." "Then call him," said I. Soon afterwards Vidyávagish came to me. On

[1] The religious association established by Rammohan Roy.

reading the page he said, "Why, this is the *Isopanishat*."[1]

When I learnt the explanation of "*Isávásyamidam sarvam*" from Vidyávagish, nectar from paradise streamed down upon me. I had been eager to receive a sympathetic response from men; now a divine voice had descended from heaven to respond in my heart of hearts, and my longing was satisfied. I wanted to see God everywhere, and what did I find in the Upanishads? I found, "If the whole world could be encompassed by God, where would impurity be? Then all would be pure, the world would be full of sweetness." I got just what I wanted. I had never heard my most intimate thoughts expressed like this anywhere else. Could men give any such response? The very mercy of God Himself descended into my heart; therefore I understood the deep significance of "*Isávásyamidam sarvam*." Oh! what words were those that struck my ears! "*Tena tyaktena bhunjitha*." "Enjoy that which He has given unto thee." What is it that He has given? He has given Himself. Enjoy that untold treasure; leave everything else and enjoy that supreme treasure. Cleave unto Him alone and give up all else. Blessed beyond measure is he who cleaves unto Him alone. This tells me that which I have long desired.

The keenness of my sorrow lay in this, that I was

[1] The Upanishads contain a record of the spiritual experiences of the Rishis or poet seers. Isá is one of the twelve authentic Upanishads regarded as revelation (Sruti).

dead to all happiness, earthly and divine; I could take no delight in the things of this world, I could feel no joy in God.

But when the divine voice declared that I should renounce all desire of worldly pleasure and take my delight in God alone, I obtained what I had wished for, and was utterly flooded with joy. It was not the dictum of my own poor intellect, it was the word of God Himself. Glory be to that Rishi in whose heart this truth was first revealed! My faith in God took deep root; in lieu of worldly pleasure I tasted divine joy. Oh! what a blessed day was that for me—a day of heavenly happiness! Every word of the Upanishads tended to enlighten my mind. With their help I daily advanced along my appointed path. All the deepest significances began to be revealed to me. One by one I read with Vidyávagish the *Isa*, *Kena*, *Katha*, *Mundaka*, and *Mándukya* Upanishads, and the remaining six with other pundits. What I read each day, I at once committed to memory, and repeated the next day to Vidyávagish. Hearing my enunciation of the Vedas, he would ask, "Whence did you learn this pronunciation? I must say we cannot pronounce like that." I had learnt the pronunciation of the Vedas from a Dravidian Vedic Brâhman.

When I had thoroughly entered into the Upanishads, and when my intellect began to be daily illumined by the light of truth, I felt a strong

desire to spread the true religion. As a beginning I proposed to form an association with my brothers, friends, and relatives. There was a small room near the tank in our grounds, which I had whitewashed and cleaned. Meanwhile the Durga Puja season commenced. All the other members of our family gave themselves up to the excitement of this festival. Should we alone remain with empty hearts? On that *Krishna-chaturdasi*[1] we founded an association, with hearts full of enthusiasm. We all bathed early in the morning, and in a purified state went and sat in that clean little room by the tank. It seemed as if Faith entered my heart as soon as I took my seat there with the others. As I looked around, each face was animated with reverence. The whole room was filled with an atmosphere of purity. After invoking the Deity with a fervid heart, I discoursed upon this text of the *Kathopanishad*:

> The Hereafter is hidden from the eyes of the foolish and of those blinded by riches.
>
> Those who think that this world alone exists and there is no future existence, they come again and again under my yoke (that of Death).

Everybody listened to my discourse in a sacred and solemn mood. This was my first sermon. When it was over, I proposed that this Sabha should be called the "Tatwaranjini Sabha," and should be made permanent. All agreed to this. The object

[1] 14th day of the dark half of the moon.

of this association was to gain the knowledge of God. The evening of the first Sunday in every month was the time appointed for the meeting of the assembly. At the second meeting Ramchandra Vidyávagish was invited, and I ordained him *âchârya* (chief minister) of this Sabha. He named it "Tatwabodhini" instead of "Tatwaranjini." Thus the Tatwabodhini Sabha was founded on Sunday, the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight, the 21st Ashwin, 1761 Shaka (6th October 1839).

CHAPTER VI

The Tatwabodhini Sabha was inaugurated on the 21st Ashwin, Shaka 1761. Its object was the diffusion of the deep truth of all our *shastras* and the knowledge of Brahma as inculcated in the Vedanta. It was the Upanishads that we considered to be the Vedanta; we did not place much reliance on the teachings of the Vedanta philosophy. On the first day there were only ten members; gradually the number began to increase. The first few meetings were held in a spacious hall on the ground-floor of my house, but later on we rented a house in Sukea Street. That house is now owned by Kalikissen Tagore. It was at this time that I made the acquaintance of Akshay Kumar Datta. He was introduced to me by Ishwar Chandra Gupta, and became a member of the Tatwabodhini Sabha. The association held its sittings at night on the first Sunday of each month, and Ramchandra Vidyávagish addressed the meeting in his capacity of minister. Each time he used to read out this verse:

O spiritual guide of the universe, Thou art without form :
Yet that I have conceived Thine image in the act of meditation ;
That I have ignored Thine inexpressibility by words of praise ;
That I have set at naught Thy omnipresence by making pilgrimages, and in other ways,—
For these three transgressions committed through confusion of spirit, O Almighty God, I implore Thy forgiveness.

All the members had the right to speak at meetings of this association ; but there was a special rule that the one who first gave his manuscript into the hands of the secretary would alone be entitled to read his dissertation. Owing to this rule some of us used to go and put their manuscripts in the secretary's bed, under his pillow ; the object being that he should get it the first thing in the morning when he rose. In the third year the first anniversary of this Tatwabodhini Sabha was celebrated with great pomp. Two years had gone by, yet the number of members did not seem to me satisfactory, nor the existence of such a Sabha sufficiently well known. Whilst I was occupied with these thoughts, the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of Bhadra[1] 1763 (A.D. 1841) gradually came round. I wanted to make this anniversary the occasion of a grand meeting, so as to make it generally known to everybody. In those days advertising was not of much use in spreading news. So what I did was to send a note of invitation addressed to every employee in all the offices and

[1] August–September.

firms throughout Calcutta. Each one came to office and saw on his desk a letter addressed to himself, on opening which he found an invitation from the Tatwabodhini Sabha. They had never even heard the name of the Sabha! For our part, we were busy the whole day. How to decorate well the rooms of the Sabha, what lessons to read, and what sermons to give, what part each one should take—these were our endeavours. Before it was dusk we had the lamps lighted, the Sabha decorated, and all arrangements completed. Would any of those invited come? I asked myself in a state of suspense. Soon after dark I saw people coming in one by one preceded by a lantern. We all received them warmly, and seated them on benches in the garden in front of the Sabha. By degrees people flocked in and filled the garden. The sight of them all inspired us with fresh zeal. None of them could make out why they had come, and what was going to happen. Every now and again I anxiously looked at my watch to see whether it was yet 8 o'clock. As soon as it struck 8, conches, bells, and horns were sounded from the terrace, and the doors of the room were flung open all at once. They were quite surprised. We then requested them to come inside and take their seats. In front was the *vedi*,[1] on either side of which were seated ten Dravidian Brâhmans in two rows, twenty in all, robed in red.

[1] Raised seat of the minister.

Ramchandra Vidyávagish sat on the *vedi*. The Dravidian Brâhmans began to chant the Vedas in unison. It was past ten before the recital of the Vedas was finished. Then I got up and delivered my discourse, in the course of which I said, "There is no doubt that the study of the English language is tending to advance the cause of learning, and that the darkness of ignorance has been dispelled in a great measure from the minds of the people of this country. Nowadays they do not feel disposed to worship stocks and stones like the ignorant masses, thinking them to be divine. Not being well acquainted with the Vedanta, they do not know that the gist of our *shastras* is that God is formless, the very essence of intelligence, omnipresent, beyond all thought or speech. So, not finding this pure knowledge of God in their own religion, they go to seek it in the *shastras* of other religions. They firmly believe that our *shastras* inculcate image-worship only; therefore they revere those *shastras* which seem to them to be higher than their own. But if the Vedanta were spread far and wide, then we would never feel drawn to other religions. That is why we are thus trying to preserve our Hindu religion."

After my discourse, Shyamacharan Bhattacharya delivered his; he was followed by Chandranath Ray, then came Umesh Chandra Ray, after that Prasanna Chandra Ghosh, then Akshay Kumar Datta, and

lastly Ramaprasad Ray. This took us nearly up to midnight. When all this was over, Ramchandra Vidyávagish treated us to a disquisition ; then hymns were sung. It struck 2. The people were tired out. They had all come straight from office, probably some of them had not yet washed or had anything to eat ; in deference to me nobody could leave before the assemblage broke up. Most likely none had heard or understood anything ; but the proceedings of the Sabha were brought to a close with great *éclat*. This was the first anniversary of our Tatwabodhini Sabha, and this was the last. After this event, in 1764[1] (A.D. 1842) I joined the Brâhma-Samaj.

The founder of the Samaj, the illustrious Rammohan Roy, had died nine years before in Bristol (England). I thought to myself that as the Brâhma-Samaj had been established for the worship of Brahma, our object would be the more easily attained by amalgamating the Tatwabodhini Sabha with it. With this view, I paid a visit to the Samaj on a Wednesday. I saw a Dravidian Brâhman reciting the Upanishads just before sunset, in one of the side rooms of the Samaj. Ramchandra Vidyávagish, Ishwar Chandra Nyayaratna, and one or two other Brâhmans were the only ones sitting there listening. Sudras were not allowed to attend. After sunset Ramchandra Vidyávagish and Ishwar Chandra

[1] Shaka era.

Nyayaratna sat in public on the *vedi* in the Samaj hall. Here Brâhmans and Sudras and all castes had equal rights. I noticed that there were very few people present. To the right of the *vedi* was spread a white floor-cloth, on which were seated four or five worshippers. And on the left were placed a few chairs, which were occupied by three or four visitors. Ishwar Chandra Nyayaratna expounded the Upanishads, and Pundit Vidyávagish explained the Mimansa[1] of the Vedanta philosophy. In front of the *vedi* the brothers Krishna and Vishnu sang hymns in unison. The service was over at 9 o'clock. After this experience, I took upon myself the task of reforming the Brâhma-Samaj, and amalgamated the Tatwabodhini Sabha with it. It was arranged that the Tatwabodhini Sabha would further the interests of the Brâhma-Samaj. From that time forward the monthly morning service of the Brâhma-Samaj was instituted in place of the monthly meeting of the Tatwabodhini Sabha; and instead of the anniversary of the Sabha on the 21st Ashwin, the date of the opening day of the Brâhma-Samaj, viz. the 11th of Magha (23rd or 24th January), was fixed upon for its anniversary. In the month of Bhadra 1750 (A.D. 1828) the Brâhma-Samaj was first founded in a hired house belonging

[1] The Vedanta is divided into two systems—Purva Mimansa, which is more a system of ritual than philosophy, and Uttara Mimansa, which is the Vedanta proper, founded on the Upanishads.

to Kamal Basu in Jorasanko ; and the anniversary of this, which used to be held in Bhadra, had been discontinued since A.D. 1822, before I joined the Brâhma-Samaj.

When we took charge of the Brâhma-Samaj, we began to consider, as the first step towards improvement, how to increase the number of its followers. Gradually by the grace of God and through our efforts the attendance became larger, and consequently the accommodation also increased. This was enough to add to our enthusiasm. Formerly the Samaj house was divided into two or three rooms ; in course of time these were broken up, and a spacious hall now stands in their place. As the room grew wider and the attendance increased, we thought to ourselves that the Brâhma religion was gaining ground. What a source of delight this was to us !

CHAPTER VII

In the Upanishads I found the echo of the idea of God that had been revealed to my heart after long continuous struggle and endeavour ; and in my own heart I found a response to whatever I could interpret of the Upanishads by careful study. So that I came to regard the Upanishads with a profound reverence. My heart tells me He is my Father, Protector, and Friend ; in the Upanishads I find the same thing stated, "He is our friend, our father. He is the dispenser, the arbiter of our destiny."

Without Him children and riches and honours are all as nothing to me : He is dearer than son, dearer than riches, dearer than all else. Turning to the Upanishads, I find this rendered thus, "This Supreme Soul is dearer than son, dearer than riches, dearer than all else."

I do not desire wealth, I do not desire honours ; then what do I desire ? The Upanishad answers, "He who worships Brahma becomes possessed of Brahma." To this I say, Aye, indeed so it is. He who worships wealth becomes possessed of wealth,

he who worships honours becomes possessed of honours, he who worships Brahma becomes possessed of Brahma. When I saw in the Upanishads, "*Ya ātmadā baladā*, etc.," I found my inmost thoughts expressed. He has not only given us life, but has given us our soul also. He is not only the Life of our life, but the Soul of our soul. He has created our soul from out of His own. That one, constant, changeless Soul, Who is infinite wisdom, has created innumerable finite souls, remaining the while eternally true to His own nature. I found this laid down expressly in the Upanishads, "He who makes one form into many." By worshipping Him I obtain Him as the result. He is the worshipful, I am His worshipper; He is my Master, I am His servant; He is my Father, I am His son. This was my guiding principle. To disseminate this truth throughout India, to induce everybody to worship Him in this manner, to ensure that His glory should be thus proclaimed everywhere,—this became the sole aim of my life. In order to carry out this project a printing-press and a journal became necessary.

I thought to myself that many members of the Tatwabodhini Sabha were working in a disconnected fashion. They got no notice of meetings of the Sabha, or were often unable to be present. Many of them did not know what was going on in the Sabha. More especially, they could not hear the discourses of Vidyávagish, which ought to be more

widely known. It was also necessary to give greater publicity to the books written with a view to propagate the knowledge of God by Rammohan Roy during his lifetime. Besides this, works on those subjects which tend to educate the mind and elevate the character of man should also be published. With these objects in view, I determined to bring out the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*[1] in 1765 (A.D. 1843). For this paper it was necessary to appoint an editor. I examined the essays of several members, but the literary merits of Akshay Kumar Datta made me select him. In his essay there appeared to me to be good points as well as bad. The good points were that his style was very charming and graceful. The fault that I found with it was that he had sung the praises of the matted-haired, ash-begrimed *sannyasi* living under a tree; but I was not in favour of the symbolism of outward renunciation. I thought, however, that if I was careful about the opinions expressed, I could certainly utilise him as an editor; and that is what practically came to pass. I appointed Akshay Babu on a handsome salary. I used to strike out such portions of his writings as were contrary to my opinions, and try to bring him round to my point of view. But this was not an easy matter, for we were as poles asunder. I was seeking to know my relations with God, he was seeking to know the relations of man with the outer

[1] *Tatwabodhini*, knowledge of Brahma; *patrika*, paper or periodical.

world. The difference was as between heaven and earth. In the end, however, with the assistance of a man of his abilities, I was enabled to realise my ambitions with regard to the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*. In those days few men possessed his beauty of style. Only a small number of newspapers then existed, and they did not touch upon any subject conducive to public welfare or instruction. The *Tatwabodhini Patrika* first supplied this want in Bengal. The propagation of the Vedas and the Vedanta, and the worship of the Supreme Brahma, my principal object, was amply fulfilled by the publication of this patrika.

Those Upanishads which treated of Brahma were alone accepted by us as the true Vedanta. We had no faith in the Vedanta philosophy, because Shankaracharya[1] seeks to prove therein that Brâhma and all created beings are one and the same. What we want is to worship God. If the worshipper and the object of worship become one, then how can there be any worship? Therefore we could not subscribe to the doctrines of the Vedanta philosophy. We were opposed to monism just in the same way as we were opposed to idolatry. We were unable to fully acquiesce in the commentaries of the Upanishads as made by Shankaracharya, inasmuch as he has tried to interpret them all in a monistic sense. For this reason I had to write a new commentary of the

[1] The famous philosopher, born about A.D. 708. Wrote commentaries on the Vedanta Sutras, the Upanishads, and Bhagavatgita.

Upanishads in place of the *Bhashya*.[1] I indited a Sanskrit commentary which would serve to maintain the theistic basis, and I began a Bengali translation which came out part by part in the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*.

[1] The accepted commentary of Shankaracharya.

CHAPTER VIII

THE printing-press of the *Tatwabodhini Patrika* was first set up in a house at Hedua. It was the same Hedua house where Rammohan Roy's school was held, and where I used to go. Ramchandra Vidyávagish used to come to this press to read the Upanishads and the Vedanta philosophy with me. He dared not do this in our own house, as something which my father had said had frightened him. One day, being annoyed with Vidyávagish, he had remarked, "I always thought Vidyávagish was a good fellow, but now I find he is spoiling Devendra with his preaching of *Brahma mantras*.[1] As it is he has very little head for business; now he neglects business altogether; it is nothing but Brahma, Brahma the whole day."

My father had some reason to be annoyed. When Lord Auckland was Governor-General a grand dinner was given in our Belgachia garden to his sister Miss Eden and other distinguished ladies and gentlemen. Beauty and wit, rank and elegance,

[1] Brâhmic texts.

dancing and wine and dazzling lights all combined to turn the garden into a veritable paradise. Certain well-known Bengalis on seeing this sumptuous feast in honour of English people remarked, "He only cares to take his pleasure with Englishmen, he never invites Bengalis." This remark reached my father's ears. Therefore some time after he gave a brilliant party with nautches and music in the same garden, to which all the Bengali notables were invited. On that day it was especially incumbent on me to receive and entertain them, but it so happened that that was the very date fixed for the meeting of our Tatwabodhini Sabha. I was ardently engrossed with the Sabha the whole day; we were to worship God, therefore I was unable to neglect this all-important duty and attend the garden-party. Lest I should incur my father's displeasure I put in an appearance on the scene of gaiety and then hurried back. This event clearly demonstrated to my father my utter distaste for the world.

From that time forward he took care not to let me be perverted by reading the Vedanta and giving myself up to Brahma. His great desire was that I should follow his example, and reach the topmost heights of rank and fame and worldly honours. But he was greatly grieved and despondent on finding the very reverse of this to be in my mind. And yet he had not grasped all my thoughts and aspirations: did not know that at that very moment my heart

was repeating, "What is life to me without Thee?" —that I had read in the Upanishads these words, "Man cannot be satisfied by riches." Was it possible for any one to drag me down into the world again?—to lure me away from God any more? Vidyávagish became frightened, and came and said to me, "The *Karta*[1] is against it; therefore I can't give you any more lessons." It was for this reason that I asked him not to come to the house, but to come and read with me at the printing office; and this is what he used to do.

When I first visited the Brâhma-Samaj, I noticed that the Vedas were recited in a private room from which Sudras were excluded. As the object of the Brâhma-Samaj was to popularise the worship of Brahma, and as it was expressly mentioned in the trust deed that all men should be able to worship Brahma without distinction of caste, I was deeply grieved to find the very reverse of this to be the practice. Again, I saw one day that Ramchandra Vidyávagish's colleague, Ishwar Chandra Nyayaratna, was trying to establish, from the *vedi* of the Brâhma-Samaj, the fact of the incarnation of Ramchandra, King of Ayodhya. This struck me as being opposed to the spirit of Brâhma Dharma. In order to counteract this, I arranged that the Vedas should be read out in public, and forbade the exposition of the doctrine of incarnation from the *vedi*. In those days

[1] Governor, head of the family.

there was a dearth of learned men who could recite the Vedas and preach the doctrines of the Brâhma Dharma, so I set about finding pupils in order to train them up. I advertised in the papers that whoever successfully passed a given examination in Sanskrit would be admitted into the Tatwabodhini Sabha, and would get a scholarship to enable him to prosecute his studies. On the day fixed for the examination five or six candidates were examined by Vidyávagish. Out of these Ananda Chandra and Taraknath were selected. I was very fond of both. Because Ananda Chandra wore his hair long I playfully used to call him by the pet-name of "Sukesha."[1]

[1] Lovely locks.

CHAPTER IX

One day I was sitting in the printing office thinking on the want of the bond of a common religious feeling among the members of the Brâhma-Samaj. People kept coming and going to and from the Samaj like the ebb and flow of the tide, but they were not bound together by any tie of religion. So when the number of visitors to the Samaj began to increase, I thought it necessary to pick and choose from among them. Some came really to worship, others came without any definite aim: whom should we recognise as the true worshipper of Brahma? Upon these considerations I decided that those who would take a vow to renounce idolatry and resolve to worship the one God, they alone would be regarded as Brâhmas. Considering that there was a Brâhma-Samaj, each member must of course be a Brâhma.

It may appear to many at first sight that the Brâhma-Samaj was formed out of the Brâhma community, but such was not the case. The name Brâhma was derived from the Brâhma-Samaj. No

undertaking succeeds without method. Therefore, in order that the conversion to the Brâhma Dharma might be made in due form, in order that the worship of Brahma might be substituted for image-worship, I drew up a declaration of faith for initiation into the Brâhma Dharma, which contained a clause to the effect that daily worship was to be performed by means of the *Gayatri mantra*.[1] This was suggested to me by Rammohan Roy's injunction to adopt the *Gayatri* for the purpose of worshipping Brahma. From this injunction the hope arose within me: "The three *vyahritis*,[2] i.e. *bhurbhuva svaha* preceded by the word *Om*, and the tripartite *Gayatri*, these three are the doors leading to the attainment of Brahma. He who recites the *Gayatri mantra* together with the *Om* and *vyahritis* for three years with untiring perseverance, he attains to Brahma." In that form of declaration it was also laid down that we should say our prayers in the morning, fasting.

We fixed upon the 7th of Pausha 1765 (A.D. 1843) as the day for initiation into the Brâhma Dharma. I screened off the small private room of the Samaj in which the Vedas used to be recited, and gave orders that no outsiders were to be admitted. A *vedi* was set up there, on which Vidyávagish took his seat, and we all sat around. A strange enthusiasm

[1] The usual text for meditation prescribed for Brâhmans.

[2] The three first words of the *Gayatri*.

was awakened in our breasts. To-day the seed of Brâhma Dharma would be sown in the heart of each of us, and we hoped that in the fulness of time it would sprout up and become a tree everlasting. And when it bore fruit, of a surety we would obtain *amrita*[1] therefrom. "With the ripening of that fruit, *amrita* will surely come." Filled with this hope and zeal I stood up before Vidyávagish in all humility and spoke thus: "We have come to you to-day, at this auspicious moment, to this sacred temple of the Brâhma-Samaj, in order to take the vow of initiation into the holy Brâhma Dharma. Make us all eager for the path of salvation, and by your precepts so exhort us that we may renounce the worship of finite gods, and pray to the one Supreme Brahma without a second; that we may feel prompted to do good, and not be entangled in the meshes of sin."

On hearing this exhortation of mine, and seeing my singleness of purpose, he shed tears, and said, "Such was the aim of Rammohan Roy, but he was not able to realise it. After all this time now his desire has been fulfilled." First Sridhar Bhattacharya got up, and reading out the vows in front of the *vedi*, accepted the Brâhma Dharma, then came Shyamacharan Bhattacharya, then myself, then one by one, Brajendranath Tagore, Girindranath Tagore, Anandachandra Bhattacharya, Taraknath

[1] Nectar of immortality.

Bhattacharya, Haradev Chattopadhaya, Akshay Kumar Datta, Harishchandra Nandi, Lala Hazarilal, Shyamacharan Mukhopadhyaya, Bhawanicharan Sen, Chandranath Ray, Ramnarayan Chattopadhaya, Sashibhushan Mukhopadhyaya, Jagatchandra Ray, Loknath Ray and others, twenty-one in all, accepted the Brâhma Dharma. The day the Tatwabodhini Sabha was founded was a memorable day; the day of initiation into the Brâhma Dharma was another day of days. Since the year 1761 (A.D. 1839) we had gradually advanced so far that to-day, taking refuge in Brahma we had entered into the Brâhma Dharma, and with it into new life. Our enthusiasm and delight knew no bounds.

This was an unprecedented event in the annals of the Brâhma-Samaj. Formerly there had existed the Brâhma-Samaj only, now the Brâhma Dharma came into existence. There can be no Dharma without Brahma, nor can Brahma be obtained without Dharma. Dharma and Brahma are inseparably connected. Having realised this close connection, we embraced the Brâhma Dharma, and thereby became Brâhmas, thus justifying the existence of the Brâhma-Samaj. Within the month of Pausha 1767 (A.D. 1845) five hundred persons took the vows and were enrolled as Brâhmas.

In those days there was a wonderful brotherly feeling between one Brâhma and another, such as is rarely met with even amongst brothers. I was

overjoyed to see such mutual affection among the Brâhmas. I thought to myself it would be a good thing if one could organise a festival for them every December in some open place outside the town. There all might improve themselves by meeting and promoting the growth of friendly intercourse, and interchanging ideas on the subject of religion. With this object in view I invited them all to my garden-house at Goriti, opposite Palta, on the 7th of Pausha[1] 1767 (A.D. 1845).

I engaged eight or nine boats and took over all the Brâhmas to this garden from Calcutta. This was the occasion of a great Brâhma festival, where their goodwill, affection, and enthusiasm had full play. In the early morning, with the rising of the sun, we raised a pæan of praise to Brahma; and sitting in the shade of a tree adorned with fruit and flowers, we delighted and sanctified ourselves by worshipping God with all our heart. At the conclusion of the service Rakhaldas Haldar proposed that: "It is fit and proper that Brâhmas should discard the sacred thread. As we have all become worshippers of the one and only God, it is better not to have any caste-distinctions. The Sikh community, worshippers of *Alakh Niranjan*,[2] having all become one nation by giving up caste and adopting the surname of "Singh," obtained such strength of

[1] December–January.
[2] The stainless invisible Being.

unity that, defeating such a dauntless Badshah of Delhi as Aurangzebe himself, they founded an independent kingdom." When Rakhaldas Haldar's father heard of his son's proposal to renounce the sacred thread, he immediately tried to stab himself in the heart with a knife.

CHAPTER X

I HAD thought at first that the Brâhmas would worship Brahma by means of the *Gayatri mantra*[1] alone, as enjoined by Rammohan Roy, but I had to give up that idea. I came to see that this *mantra* was too difficult for the majority of people to grasp. They do not find it congenial to use it as an instrument of prayer. To worship God by mastering the *Gayatri mantra* together with its meaning was a task requiring strenuous endeavour. "Victory or death"—without such a resolute frame of mind, success in this *mantra* is not obtainable. But men of such strong determination and staunch faith are rare indeed. Perhaps there may be one in a thousand. But what I wanted was that the worship of Brahma should obtain generally, among all classes of people. So I decided that those who could worship Brahma by means of the *Gayatri* were welcome to do so; those who were incapable of this were free to adopt any easier method of communion with God. Therefore in the form of

[1] The usual text for meditation.

declaration, for the words, "I will daily worship the Supreme Brahma by ten times repeating the *Gayatri* with love and reverence," were substituted, "I shall daily devote my soul to the Supreme Brahma with love and reverence." But for the communion of the soul with God words are a potent medium. And if those words are time-honoured and well-known, and easy of utterance and comprehension, the worshipper benefits by them all the sooner. Therefore I was overjoyed to find in the Upanishads, after much searching, these two noble expressions, answering to the above qualities and suited to the worship of Brahma :

> Brahma is Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite.
> His manifestation is eternal Bliss : it shineth forth.

These words have fulfilled my wishes and crowned my efforts with success. Because now I find that all Brâhmas worship Brahma by reverently uttering :

> Brahma is Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite.
> His manifestation is eternal Bliss : it shineth forth.

These two expressions were sufficient for each Brâhma to devote his soul to Brahma, alone and in private. But for the purpose of worshipping Brahma in the Brâhma-Samaj, a more comprehensive form of worship was required. With this object in view, after having introduced these two texts, I added to them three more verses from the Upanishads. The first was :

He is all-pervading, spotless, formless, without veins and scars, pure and undefiled, without sin ;
He is all-seeing, and the ruler of our minds ;
He is the most high and self-revealed ;
He bestows upon His creatures at all times all things that are needful.

In order to realise and understand at the time of worship that this all-pervading, all-seeing, formless Deity has created the universe, the following verse was added :

He is the source of life, mind, and all the senses ; of sky, air, light, water, and that which contains them all—this earth.
He is the sustainer of all things ; and the universe to this day is moving under His control.

In order to dwell upon this idea this third verse was afterwards inserted :

At His command the fire burns bright,
At His command the sun gives light,
At His command the clouds and winds speed on, and death itself roams abroad.

The following verses were extracted, in a revised form, from the Tantras, so as to form a hymn of praise to the Supreme Being, the Saviour and Upholder of this universe :

We salute Thee, Spirit of Truth and Cause of this universe.
We salute Thee, Essence of Wisdom and Upholder of all that is.
Thou art the Bestower of Salvation and only God, the One without a second ;
Eternal and all-pervading Brahma, we salute Thee.

Thou alone art the refuge of all things ; Thou alone art worthy of homage.
Thou art One, the Protector of the world, self-revealed.
Thou alone art the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the Universe.
Thou alone art most high, fixed, and unfaltering of purpose.

Thou alone art the terror of all terrors, and terrific amongst those that terrify.
Thou alone art the goal of all creatures, and the purest of the pure.
Thou alone art the Ruler of the mighty,
Higher than the highest, and Protector of protections.

Thee do we bear in remembrance ; to Thee do we pray.
Thou art the witness of this universe ; before Thee we prostrate ourselves.
O Thou one and only Spirit of Truth, Thou Upholder of the Universe, Lord of all, wholly self-reliant ;
Thou Ship amidst the ocean of this life, we cling to Thee alone as our only refuge.

Shyamacharan Tatwavagish was born in a Tantrik family. His father, Kamalakanta Chudamani, had been a zealous Tantrik, so that Tatwavagish was well versed in Tantrik literature. Having added to our form of Brahma worship the three verses, "*Saparyagâ*, etc.," from the Upanishads, I began to search the Vedas for an inspiring hymn to Brahma to be inserted after them, but could find none to my liking ; at which I was sorely perplexed and disturbed. When he came to know the cause of my anxiety, Tatwavagish said that there was a beautiful hymn to Brahma in the Tantra

shastra. On my asking him what it was, he read out the original of the above from the Mahanirvana Tantra. I was delighted with it. But as it was tinged with Advaita doctrines I was unable to accept it in its entirety. Therefore I altered it so as to make it conform to the Brâhma Dharma. The original hymn is divided into five parts (*ratnas*).

The first two lines of the first verse ran thus :

Salutation to Being, the refuge of all the worlds !
Salutation to Wisdom, which is the Atma whose manifestation is the Universe.

I changed this into :

We salute Thee, Spirit of Truth and Cause of this Universe.
We salute Thee, Essence of Wisdom and Upholder of all that is.

In the third and fourth lines, for

Salutation to Brahma, the One without a second, the Bestower of Salvation ;
Salutation to Brahma, all-pervading, without qualities.

I substituted

Thou art the bestower of Salvation and only God ; the One without a second ;
Eternal and all-pervading Brahma, we salute Thee !

In the second line of the second verse occur the words :

Thou art One, the Cause of the world, manifested in the Universe.

In the place of this, I put :

Thou art One, the Protector of the world, self-revealed.

In the fourth line of the third verse, for "Protector of protectors," I substituted "Protector of protections."

The fourth verse I entirely omitted.

The first line of the fifth verse :

> Thee alone do we bear in remembrance ; on that alone do we meditate :

I altered thus :

> Thee do we bear in remembrance, to Thee do we pray.

In the next line, for the words "Thee alone" I substituted "Thee we."

After making these corrections, I read it over, and found that it was very beautiful. According to the Brâhma Dharma, God is the Creator, not the substance, of the universe. Therefore in the first line I said, "He is the Spirit of Truth and Cause of the universe," and in the second line I said, "He is the Essence of Wisdom, and the Upholder of all that is." After this came, "He Who is the creator and supporter of the universe, He is our Saviour, He is Brahma, omnipresent, beyond the reach of time, eternal." In modifying this Tantrik hymn and translating it into Bengali, I received signal help from Tatwavagish, for which I am still thankful to him.

I then composed a prayer, which was placed at the very end of our form of worship : "O Supreme Spirit, deliver us from sin committed through

delusion, and guard us from evil desires, that we may strive to walk in Thy appointed path of righteousness. Inspire us to meditate constantly and lovingly upon Thy immeasurable glory and supreme goodness, so that in the fulness of time our desires may be crowned by the heavenly bliss of everlasting communion with Thee."

This form of worship was introduced into the Brâhma-Samaj in A.D. 1845. But at that time the reading of the hymn was not followed by the Bengali translation, which began to be recited after the year A.D. 1848. Before this form of worship was instituted in the Brâhma-Samaj they used to have only the recital of the Vedas, the reading of verses from the Upanishads together with their commentaries, sermons by Ramchandra Vidyávagish, and the singing of hymns.

CHAPTER XI

My mind and heart were fully satisfied by finding presented in a more vivid manner in the Upanishads the truths at which I had arrived beforehand through my own poor understanding by the grace of God. I found in the Upanishads that He is the true, the wise, the eternal Brahma. At one time the unrestrained power of Nature used to inspire me with extreme terror. Now I clearly perceived that there was a ruler over nature, that one true Being holds the reins of nature. One lash of His makes the world go round. He is the king of kings, the great king. He is our father, mother, and friend. Knowing this I cast off all fear, and fulfil the desire of my heart by His worship. Alone, in solitude, I feel His sublime and glorious might. In the Brâhma-Samaj I sing His praises with my brethren ; with my friends I call on Him who is the friend of us all. All my wishes were by this completely realised.

As long as I had failed to approach Him, I used to think that every one on this earth was

favoured by fortune, and I alone was most unfortunate; there were so many people hurrying towards God — so many to the temple of Vis'wes'war,[1] so many to the shrine of Jagannath, so many to Dwarka and Haridwar—people without number. Everywhere the temples were filled with the presence of gods, overflowing with the rapture of devotion, ringing with the holy sounds of worship; but to me it was all empty. To see the God whom I could adore, and stand in His presence, to worship Him with the offering of my heart's devotion, to sing of His glory—this had been the ardent longing that consumed me with bitter pain, like unto the pangs of thirst when no water is nigh. Now that yearning was satisfied, and all my sorrow departed.

After all this time I realised this mercy of the All-merciful, that He never forsakes His devoted worshipper. He who seeketh Him shall find Him. That I should be a poor, miserable, and unfortunate wanderer upon the face of this earth was more than He could bear to see. He revealed Himself to me. I saw that "He is in the sky, filled with energy and immortality, the Supreme Being, all-perceiving." This omniscient, radiant, and immortal Being pervaded all space. In the temple of the universe I saw the Lord of the universe. Nobody can place Him anywhere, nobody can make Him with the hand, He exists for ever in His own self. I had

[1] The principal temple in Benares.

found the God of my adoration, sanctified myself by worshipping Him, alone and in the company of others. The hope which I had in my heart when I approached His presence, was now fulfilled to the utmost. I was satisfied in that I had received so much; but He was not satisfied with giving so little. He wants to give more—like unto a mother He wants to give still more. What I had never known, what I had never asked for, even that He wants to give.

Although I perceived that the *Gayatri* was not suitable for the popular worship of Brahma, still I held on to that goddess Savitri[1] and never left her. For generations we have been initiated in this *Gayatri mantra*. It runs in our blood. I had forgotten this *mantra*, although I had been initiated in it at the time of my sacred thread ceremony. As soon as I saw the efficacy of the *Gayatri* for Brahma worship, as taught by Rammohan Roy, it sank deep into my soul. With constant repetition of its meaning I meditated on it to the best of my power. When I first reduced the Brâhmic declaration of faith to writing, I also inculcated in it the worship of Brahma by means of the *Gayatri mantra*. Though I did not succeed in benefiting others by the promulgation of the *Gayatri mantra*, yet in my own case it was productive of much good. I continued to worship Him daily by means of the *Gayatri*, before touching

[1] A personification of the *Gayatri mantra*.

any food, with mind alert and collected so as to fulfil completely the injunctions of the Brâhma Dharma.

The deep significance of the *Gayatri* began to be disclosed to my mind day by day. Gradually the spirit of He Who sends us permeated my whole heart. By this time I was firmly convinced that God was not merely a silent witness with regard to myself. He was an indwelling Spirit, Who ever inspired my thoughts and volitions. In this way a deep and living connection was established with Him. Formerly I had deemed it privilege enough to salute Him from a distance; now I obtained this thing beyond all hope, that He was not far from me, not only a silent witness, but that He dwelt within my soul and inspired all my thoughts. Then I knew that I was not helpless, He is my stay everlasting. When not knowing Him, I was wandering sad and despondent; even then, dwelling within me, He gradually opened my inner eye, the eye of wisdom. All this time I did not know that He was leading me by the hand; now I consciously walked under His guidance.

From now I began to train myself to listen for His command, to understand the difference between my own inclination and His will. What seemed to me to be the insidious promptings of my own desires I was careful to avoid; and what appeared to my conscience to be His command, that I tried to follow. Then I prayed to Him to inspire me with righteous-

ness, to guard me with moral strength, to give me patience, courage, fortitude, and contentment. What profit beyond all expectation had I not gained by adopting the *Gayatri mantra*! I had seen Him face to face, had heard His voice of command, and had become His constant companion. I could make out that he was guiding me, seated within my heart. Even as He, dwelling in the sky, guides the stars and planets, so does He, dwelling within my heart, inspire all my righteous feelings and guide my soul. Whenever, in solitude and in the dark, I acted against His wish, I at once felt His chastening influence; at once I saw His terrible face, "dread as an uplifted thunderbolt," and the blood froze in my veins. Again, whenever I performed some good action in secret, He openly rewarded me; I saw His benign countenance, all my heart was purified with the waters of holiness. I felt that, ever enshrined within my heart, He taught me wisdom like a guru, and prompted me to do good deeds, so that I exclaimed, "Thou art Father too and Mother, Thou art the Guru and bestower of all wisdom." In punishment as in reward I discerned His love alone. Nurtured by His love, falling to rise again, I had come thus far. I was then twenty-eight years of age.

CHAPTER XII

FORMERLY when I used to see people worshipping factitious and finite gods in their petty shrines I thought to myself, When shall I see my own Infinite God face to face in the temple of this universe and adore Him? This desire was then burning in my heart night and day. Waking or asleep, this was my one wish, my only thought. Now, having seen in the heavens this radiant and immortal Being, all my desires were fulfilled, and all my torment was at an end.

I was satisfied with getting so much, but He was not content with giving so little. Hitherto He had existed beyond and outside myself; now He revealed Himself within me, I saw Him within my soul. The lord of the world-temple became the lord of my heart's shrine, and from thence I began to hear silent and solemn religious teachings. Fortune favoured me beyond all my expectations. I received more than I had ever hoped for, and scaled mountains, cripple though I was. I had not known how boundless was His mercy. The craving I had felt when

seeking for Him increased a hundred-fold now that I had found Him. The little that I now see of Him, the little of His voice that I can hear, is not enough to assuage my hunger and thirst. "The more you feed, the greater the greed."

"O my Lord! now that I have seen Thee, reveal Thyself to me more vividly. I have been blest by hearing the sound of Thy voice, pour out its sweet strains more and more honeyed. Let Thy beauty appear before me under ever-changing forms. Now Thou appearest to me and disappearest like a flash of lightning; I cannot retain my hold on Thee. Do Thou dwell for ever in my heart." Whilst saying these words the light of His love found its way into my heart like the rays of the morning sun. Without Him I had been as one dead, with a void in my heart, plunged in the darkness of despondency. Now, at the rising of the sun of love, life was infused into my heart, I was awakened from my deep slumber, the gloom of sadness was dispelled. Having found God, the current of my life flowed on swiftly, I gained fresh strength. The tide of my good fortune set in. I became a pilgrim on the path of love. I came to know now that He was the life of my life, the Friend of my heart; that I could not pass a single moment without Him.

CHAPTER XIII

One morning, in the month of Bysakh 1767 (A.D. 1845), I was reading the papers, when a clerk of our Bank, Rajendranath Sircar, came to me with tears in his eyes. He said, "Last Sunday my wife and the wife of my youngest brother Umeschandra were going to a party in a carriage, when Umeschandra came and took his wife out of the carriage by force, and they both went off to Dr. Duff's house to become Christians. My father, after much fruitless effort to bring them back from there, filed a complaint in the Supreme Court. That complaint was dismissed. But I went to Dr. Duff, and, telling him that we would again file a complaint, entreated him not to baptize my brother and sister-in-law until the second judgment was given. But he has been deaf to my entreaties and has baptized them last evening." And Rajendranath fell to weeping.

At this I felt greatly indignant and distressed. They are making Christians even of our Zenana ladies! Wait a bit, I am going to put a stop to this. So saying, I was up. I immediately set

Akshay Kumar Datta's pen in motion, and a spirited article appeared in the *Tatwabodhini Patrika* : "Even the ladies of our Zenana are falling away from their own religion and adopting that of others. Are we not to be roused even by the direct evidence of such dreadful calamities? How much longer are we going to remain overpowered by the sleep of inaction? Behold, our religion is being altogether destroyed, our country is on the road to ruin, and our very Hindu name is about to be wiped out for ever. . . . Therefore, if you desire your own welfare and that of your family, if you hope for the advancement of our country and have regard for truth, then keep your boys aloof from all contact with missionaries. Give up sending your sons to their schools, and take immediate steps to enable them to cultivate their minds with due vigour. Perhaps you will say, where else can the children of the poor receive education except in mission schools? But is not this a crying shame? In order to spread their own religion the Christians have set at naught the waves of the deep sea, and entering India are founding schools in every town and every village ; whereas we have not got a single good school of our own where our children can be taught. If we all combine could we not set up schools as good as theirs or ten times better? What object is there which cannot be achieved by unity?"

Akshay Kumar Datta's article was published in

the *Patrika*, and after that I went about in a carriage every day from morning till evening to all the leading and distinguished men in Calcutta, and entreated them to adopt measures by which Hindu children would no longer have to attend missionary schools and might be educated in schools of our own. Raja Radhakanta Deb and Raja Satyacharan Ghosal on the one hand, on the other hand Ramgopal Ghose —I went to each and all of them, and incited them all. They were all fired by my enthusiasm. This did away with the rivalry between the Dharma sabha and the Brâhma sabha, and all their disagreement with each other. All were ranged on the same side, and tried their best to prevent children going to Christian schools and missionaries making Christian converts. A large meeting was convened on the 13th Jaishtha, at which nearly a thousand people assembled. It was resolved that, as missionaries had their free schools, so we also should have a school where children would be taught free of charge. We were waiting subscription-book in hand to see what each one would subscribe, when Ashutosh Deb and Pramathanath Deb took the book and put down ten thousand rupees against their names. Raja Satyacharan Ghosal subscribed three thousand, Brajanath Dhar two thousand, and Raja Radhakanta Deb one thousand. In this manner forty thousand rupees were raised then and there. Then we knew that our labours were crowned with success. As a result of

this meeting an educational institution called the *Hindu-hitârthi*[1] was founded, and Raja Radhakanta Deb Bahadur was appointed president to carry on its work. Harimohun Sen and I became the secretaries. Babu Bhudeb Mukhopadhaya was the first teacher appointed in this free school. Thenceforward the tide of Christian conversion was stemmed, and the cause of the missionaries received a serious blow.

[1] The well-wisher of Hindus.

CHAPTER XIV

When I found the knowledge of Brahma and a system of His worship in the Upanishads, and when I came to know that this was the *shastra* whose authority was recognised throughout the whole of India, I resolved to propagate the Brâhma form of worship by means of the Upanishads. All our theologians revere the Upanishads as the Vedanta, the crowning point and essence of all the Vedas. If I could preach the Brâhma Dharma as based upon the Vedanta, then all India would have one religion, all dissensions would come to an end, all would be united in a common brotherhood, her former valour and power would be revived, and finally she would regain her freedom. Such were the lofty aspirations which my mind then entertained. Idolatry with all its pomp and circumstance was to be found chiefly in the Tantras and Puranas,[1] and had no place in the

[1] The Puranas are Scriptures later than the Vedas. They are a storehouse of mythological and historical legends. They are the popular *shastras* or sacred books in everyday use.

Tantras represent an esoteric phase of Hinduism, generally later than that of the Puranas.

Vedanta. If every one were to turn from the Tantras and Puranas to the Upanishads, if they sought to acquire the knowledge of Brahma as taught in the Upanishads, and devoted themselves to His worship, then it would result in the utmost good of India.

To clear the path to that great good was my sole aim and object. But the Vedas, whose crowning point were the Upanishads, the Vedas whose doctrines and conclusions the Vedanta philosophy took such pains to arrive at, those Vedas were a sealed book to us. A few of the Upanishads had been published at the instance of Rammohan Roy, and I too had collected some that had not yet been printed. But we could learn nothing of the extensive Vedic literature. The Vedas had become virtually extinct in Bengal. *Nyaya*[1] and *Smriit*[2] *shastras* were studied in every *tol*,[3] and many pundits versed in these *shastras* came forth thence, but the Vedas were totally ignored. The business of Brâhmans, that of learning and teaching the Vedas, had altogether disappeared from the country ; there remained Brâhmans only in name, bereft of all Vedic knowledge, bearing the sacred thread alone. With the exception of one or two learned Brâhman pundits, they did not even know the meaning of their daily prayers.

I felt a keen desire to learn the Vedas thoroughly.

[1] Hindu system of logic. [2] Treatises on Hindu law.
[3] Indigenous Sanskrit schools.

Benares was the seat of Vedic culture, so I purposed sending students there to learn the Vedas. In the year 1766 (A.D. 1844) I sent one student to Benares. He collected all the original Vedic manuscripts there, and began to study them. In the following year three others were sent there. Ananda Chandra, Taraknath, Baneshwar, and Ramanath, these were the four students.

When I sent them to Benares my father was in England. The task of managing his various affairs devolved upon me; but I was not able to attend to any business matters properly. My subordinates used to do all the work, I was only concerned with the Vedas, the Vedanta, religion, God, and the ultimate goal of life. I was not even able to stay quietly in the house. With the stress and worry of business affairs my detachment from the world began to increase. I felt no inclination to become the owner of all this wealth. To renounce everything and wander about alone, this was the desire that reigned in my heart. Imbued with His love I would roam in such lonely places that none would know; I would see His glory on land and water, would witness His mercy in different climes, would feel His protective power in foreign countries, in danger and peril; in the enthusiasm of this desire I could no longer stay at home.

In the month of Shravana[1] 1768 (A.D. 1846), in

[1] July–August.

the fulness of the rainy season, I went up the Ganges in a boat. My good wife Sarada Devi came to me with tears in her eyes and said, "Where would you go, leaving me behind? If you must indeed go, take me with you." So, hiring a pinnace for her, I took her with me. She installed herself in it with Dwijendranath, Satyendranath, and Hemendranath, while I occupied a large roomy boat of my own with Rajnarayan Bose.[1] Dwijendranath was then seven, Satyendranath five, and Hemendranath three years old.

Rajnarayan Bose's father's name was Nundokishore Bose. He was a favourite pupil of Rammohan Roy. I was greatly delighted to become acquainted with a man of his piety and sweet nature. He adopted the Brâhma religion in A.D. 1844. "It would be a very good thing if Rajnarayan became a Brâhma," he always used to say. He did not live to see this desire fulfilled. After his death Rajnarayan Babu came to see me in mourning. From that moment I took him for my friend. He was one of the most distinguished English scholars of the time, and was well known as an educated man. His learning, modesty, and piety drew me towards him more and more day by day. At last in A.D. 1845 he declared himself a Brâhma. His religious views were in complete accord with mine. In him I found an enthusiastic supporter. I specially entrusted him with all the English reading and writing necessary at that time

[1] Later one of the leading spirits of the Adi Brâhma-Samaj.

for the spread of religion. I used to expound to him the Katha and other Upanishads ; he translated them into English, and those translations were published in the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*. Although he was not then very well off, yet he was always cheerful, and we always saw a smile on his face. He was then my inseparable companion ; I was very fond of having religious discussions with him. I used to look upon him as one of the family.

When I took this trip with my family, I had Rajnarayan Babu with me, and he stayed in my boat. My wife and sons were in the pinnace. We started on our tour in high spirits. The strong Shravana current was against us, we advanced slowly and with great difficulty. It took three or four days to reach Hugli. On arriving at Kalna two days later we thought we had come a long distance indeed. Going along in this manner, when we had left Patuli behind, one day at 4 o'clock I said to Rajnarayan Babu, "Finish your diary for to-day. The beauty of nature is too glorious to lose, come, let us go and sit on deck." He said, "It is quite early yet ; who knows what events may yet happen for my diary?" Whilst talking to him thus I saw a dark cloud gathering in the west, and feared a heavy storm. "Let us get into the pinnace," I said to Rajnarayan Babu, "it is not safe to stay in the boat during a storm." The boatmen put the boat alongside the pinnace. I was sitting on the deck with my feet on

the ladder, and two boatmen were holding the boat and pinnace together. Another boat was being towed along, and its tow-rope fouled the top of our mast. One of our men was trying to dislodge it with a long pole, and I was watching him. The man who was thus engaged could not bear the weight of the pole, and it was about to fall from his hands upon my head. Cries of "Take care! Take care!" arose on all sides, and there was a great hubbub. I was still looking up at the mast. The boatman, straining every nerve, just managed to miss my head, but could not keep clear altogether. The end of the pole struck the frame of my spectacles near the corner of my eye. My eye was saved, but the frame cut deep into my nose. I pulled off my spectacles, and the blood began to flow profusely. I then came down from deck and began to wash off the blood. The storm was forgotten, we were all rather off our guard. The boatmen were holding on to the pinnace, and in this manner the pinnace was sailing along with the boat.

All of a sudden a gale sprang up and broke the mast of the pinnace. The broken mast with its sail and ropes got entangled with the mast of the boat, and fell upon the deck where I had been sitting. Now it kept hanging over my head. The pinnace, with its remaining sails, rushed forward in the storm, dragging the boat along with it. The two men who were holding on could no longer keep it

under control. The boat lurched to one side owing to the pull of the pinnace. That side was nearly level with the water, only about a finger's breadth above it. A hue and cry arose about cutting the rope entangled with the mast. A *dao*![1] a *dao*! But no *dao* was to be found. Some one climbed up the mast with a blunt *dao*. Blow after blow was struck, but the rope could not be cut with the blunt weapon. With the utmost difficulty one rope was cut through, and yet another, a third was being hacked at. Rajnarayan Babu and myself were gazing at the water in silence. We are here one moment, and gone the next; life and death go hand-in-hand. Rajnarayan Babu's eyes were fixed, his voice hushed, his body rigid. The boatmen were still cutting the rope. Again a severe gust of wind arose. "Here it is again," exclaimed the boatmen, while they snapped the rope. The boat, thus set free, shot like an arrow to the opposite bank, and stood alongside. I immediately jumped on land, and helped Rajnarayan Babu to get out also.

We were now safely landed, but the pinnace was still rushing on. "Stop, stop," cried the boatmen. It was then sunset, and the shades of evening together with the gloom of the clouds made it rather dark. I could not quite make out in the darkness whether the pinnace had stopped or not. From another side I saw a small boat advancing swiftly towards

[1] A heavy curved knife.

ours. It soon came up with us. "What is this again," thought I, "can it be a *dacoit* boat?" I felt alarmed. A man jumped on land from the boat. I saw it was our own Swarup *khansama*.[1] His face was sad and drawn. He gave me a letter. From what I could read of it with great effort in the dark, it appeared to contain news of my father's death. He said, "All Calcutta is upset. Several people have set out in boats in search of you. Nobody has yet succeeded in coming up with you, and all my trouble is now rewarded in having been able to find you." This news came upon me like a thunderbolt. Sadly and silently I rowed towards the pinnace in my boat, and reaching it, got on board, and read the letter clearly by lamplight. Nothing was to be done now. I did not then give anybody the news of his death.

Early the next morning I turned back towards Calcutta. My boat was a fourteen-oared one. Boards were nailed across the inner benches on either side, and a carpet spread over them. I took my wife and children in there; gave the whole pinnace up to Rajnarayan Babu; and asked him to follow us leisurely. The boat rushed onwards swiftly like a falling star with the September current of the Ganges, propelled by sail and oar, but my mind rushed on ahead of it. The noise of wind and rain was ceaseless in the cloudy sky. Midway, shortly

[1] Personal attendant.

before reaching Kalna, such a strong gale sprang up near an open field that the boat came near to being capsized. It was then going alongside the bank. The boatmen immediately jumped on land and tied the boat to the stump of a tree close by so that it was safe. That stump then seemed to me a veritable shelter in the wilderness, and a good and true friend. In five minutes my anxiety prompted me to set the boat free.

When daylight was nearly gone I caught a glimpse of the pale sun from between the clouds. We had then reached Sukha Sagar. Sunset found us at Chandernagore. By this time the rowers' hands were benumbed. After the continuous, incessant strain they could work no longer. Moreover high tide set in. This was a great hindrance. From here to Palta took us up to 8 o'clock in the evening. Here the boat began to have a list to one side. From 10 in the morning till the evening it had been raining without a break. We had to stop the boat too once or twice for fear of sudden gusts of wind. The boatmen were wet through and shivering with cold. As soon as we reached Palta a man from the river-side came and told us a carriage was ready, at which news my drooping spirits revived. I had been sitting in the boat ever since, without stirring or getting up even once—now on hearing of the carriage I came and stood outside the door of the cabin. There I found myself knee-deep in water.

The water had filled the hold of the boat and risen more than a foot above the flooring. It was all rain-water. I had not been aware of this before. Had there been no carriage waiting at Palta, had we gone on straight towards Calcutta in the boat, it would most certainly have gone down with the weight of the water, and I should not have lived to tell this tale.

Descending from the boat, we got into the carriage. The roads were full of water, in which the carriage-wheels were sunk up to the middle. With the utmost difficulty we reached home at midnight. Every one was asleep, not a soul stirring. I sent my wife and children into the inner apartments, and myself went up to the third floor of the *boytakkhana*. There I was welcomed by my cousin Braja Babu. Seeing him thus waiting for me alone up to such a late hour gave me a sort of fright, —I know not why.

CHAPTER XV

My father died in London in Shravana 1768 (A.D. 1846). He was then fifty-one years of age. My youngest brother Nagendranath and my cousin Nabinchandra Mukherji were present at his death-bed. The news reached me in Bhadra. I went with my second brother to the opposite bank of the Ganges on the next fourteenth day of the dark half of the moon, and performed his obsequies by burning an effigy made of *kusa* grass. Counting from this day we went into the customary mourning for ten days, and partook of *havishyânna*.[1] During this period of mourning, in consonance with social rules of courtesy, I used to get up early every morning and go about, barefoot, till midday visiting all the leading men of Calcutta, and after midday till evening I used to receive these gentlemen at my house. I religiously performed all the rigorous ceremonials prescribed for a son in the event of his father's death. My youngest uncle Ramanath Tagore sounded a note of

[1] A simple meal of rice and vegetables boiled together in one pot with butter and salt—the only food during the period of deep mourning.

warning, saying, "Look here, don't make a fuss now by harping upon Brahma. Dada's[1] name is too well known."

When I went to see Raja Radhakanta Dev, he made me sit down by him, and made many kind enquiries about my father, and expressed sincere sorrow for his death. He was very fond of me, and advised me thus as a friend, "Perform the Shraddha ceremony properly, according to the rules laid down in the *shastras*." I said to him with due deference, "I have taken the vow of Brâhmaism, and cannot do anything contrary to that vow. For if I did so I should commit a sin against religion. But the Shraddha I shall perform will be in accordance with the highest teachings of the Upanishads." He replied, "No, no, that cannot be; then the Shraddha will not conform to the recognised rites. That would be opposed to social good manners. Listen to my advice, and all will go well."

I said to my second brother Girindranath, "As we are Brâhmas now, we cannot perform the Shraddha by bringing in the *Shaligram*. If we do that, what is the good of having become Brâhmas, and why should we have taken vows?" He answered softly with bent head, "Then everybody will forsake us, every one will go against us. How can we get on in the world? Our family will not prosper, and we shall find ourselves in great straits." "In spite of

[1] Elder brother.

all that, we cannot possibly countenance idolatry," I said.

I did not receive any support from anybody in this matter. Even my dear brother threw cold water on my enthusiasm. Everybody was opposed to my views. So strong was the opposition, it would appear that I was going to drag them all down to perdition. They seemed to think that by one act of mine all would be saved or lost. I was alone on one side, against everybody on the other. No one uttered a single word of hope or encouragement.

When I was thus surrounded on all sides by difficulties, helpless and friendless, only one staunch Brâhma came to my assistance and gave expression to my deepest sentiments. "Fear the world? What fear? Fear Him alone, fearing whom one is fearless of all else. What is the blame of men before religion? Life itself can be sacrificed for religion. We shall cling to the Brâhma Dharma even at the risk of our lives."

Who was this man? It was Lalla Hazarilal. In this crisis I came to learn that the Hindustanis of the North-Western Provinces are superior to Bengalis in religious faith and courage. He took my side and stood by me, at one with me in heart and soul. When my grandfather had gone on a pilgrimage to Brindabun, he had found Hazarilal a helpless orphan there and brought him to our house. He gave him a home, intending to do the best for his future

welfare ; but it turned out to be the contrary in this case. In coming to Calcutta he was carried away by the vicious current of town life. There was nobody to look after him, no one who cared what happened to him ; he fell into bad company, and led a depraved and dissolute life. In this evil plight he obtained by the grace of God a refuge in Brâhmaism. The strength of Brâhma Dharma entered into his heart, and with its help he overcame his sinful tendencies and was restored to the path of a virtuous life. This same Hazarilal afterwards became a Brâhma missionary. Having obtained release from the tortuous ways of sin by accepting the Brâhma Dharma, he tried to bring others also into the path of virtue. He began to point out the way of the highest good which lies in the Brâhma Dharma to every person in Calcutta, rich and poor and wise and honoured. It was entirely owing to his efforts that so many people then became Brâhmas within such a short time. It was he who said to me in this trying time, " Why fear men ? Which is greater,—God or man ? " His words filled me with courage and zeal. The fire of God burned brighter within my heart.

I could not sleep well at night on account of all this discussion and depression. I had lost my father ; then the whole day there was the worry and trouble of social duties, and over and above that there was this spiritual struggle going on within me. Which would triumph, the world or religion ?—one could

not tell: this was what worried me. My constant prayer to God was, "Vouchsafe strength unto my weak heart, be Thou my refuge." All these anxieties and troubles deprived me of all sleep at night, my head felt dazed on the pillow. I would now doze off and again wake up. It was as if I was on the borderland between waking and sleeping. At such a time some one came to me in the dark and said, "Get up," and I at once sat up. He said, "Get out of bed," and I got up; he said, "Follow me," and I followed. He went down the steps leading out of the inner apartments; I did the same and came out into the courtyard with him. We stood before the front door. The *durwans*[1] were sleeping. My guide touched the door, and the two wings flew open at once. I went out with him into the street in front of the house. He seemed to be a shadow-like form. I could not see him clearly, but felt myself constrained to do immediately whatever he bade me. From thence he mounted upwards to the sky; I also followed him. Clusters of stars and planets were shedding a bright lustre right and left and in front of me, and I was passing through them. On the way I entered a sea of mist, where the stars and planets were no longer visible. After traversing the mist for some distance I came upon a still full moon, like a small island in that vaporous ocean. The nearer I came the larger grew that moon. It no

[1] Door-keepers.

longer appeared round, but flat like our earth. The apparition went and stood on that world, and I did likewise. The ground was all of white marble. Not a single blade of grass was there,—no flowers, no fruit. Only that bare white plain stretched all around. The light there was not derived from the sun. It shone in its own light. No ray of the sun could penetrate the surrounding mist. The light was very soft, like the shade we have in the day-time. The air was pleasing to the senses.

In the course of my journey across this world I entered one of its cities. All the houses and all the streets were of white marble ; not a single soul was to be seen in the clean and bright and polished streets. No noise was to be heard, everything was calm and peaceful. My guide entered a house by the road and went up to the second floor ; I also went with him. I found myself in a spacious room, in which there were a table and some chairs of white marble. He told me to sit down, and I sat down in one of the chairs. The phantom then vanished. Nobody else was there. I sat silent in that silent room ; shortly afterwards the curtain of one of the doors in front of the room was drawn aside, and my mother appeared. Her hair was loose, just as I had seen it on the day of her death. When she died, I never thought that she was dead. Even when I came back from the burning-ground after performing her funeral ceremonies, I could not believe that she was

dead. I felt sure that she was still alive. Now I saw that living mother of mine before me. She said, "I wanted to see thee, so I sent for thee. Hast thou really become a *brâhmagnani*?[1] *Kulam pavitram jananî kritârthâ.*"[2] On seeing her, and hearing these sweet words of hers, my trance gave way before a flood of joy. I found myself still tossing on my bed.

The Shraddha day came round. In front of our house a long shed was erected on the western courtyard, and adorned with the gold and silver offerings to be made at the *dan-sagar*.[3] Gradually the quadrangle became filled with friends and relatives by blood or marriage. I chose a text free from all association of idolatry, and instructed Shyamacharan Bhattacharya beforehand to make me repeat that *mantra* at the time of the *danotsarga*.[4] On the other hand, priests and relatives had deposited the *Shaligram*, etc. in the middle of the shed, and were awaiting my arrival. On all sides there was noise and confusion and the press of people. Meanwhile I took Shyamacharan Bhattacharya to one end of the Shraddha shed, and began to offer the gifts with the *mantra* previously fixed upon. Two or three offerings had already been made in this manner when my cousin

[1] One who has known Brahma.
[2] Sanctified is the family, fulfilled is the mother's desire.
[3] Funeral gifts on a grand scale.
[4] Offering of gifts.

Madan Babu noticed us, and exclaimed, "What are you all doing here? The offerings are being made over yonder. There is no *Shaligram* there, no priests, nothing at all." Elsewhere another uproar arose; everybody began to say, "They won't let those *kirtan* singers come in." Nilratan Haldar said, "Alas! the *karta* was very fond of hearing *kirtan*." My youngest uncle Ramanath Tagore asked me, "Why did you forbid the *kirtan* singers to come?" I said I knew nothing about it, and had not forbidden them. He said, "There, look, Hazarilal won't allow the *kirtan* singers to enter the house!" I hastily offered the sixteen items and other gifts, and went up to my rooms in the third story.

After that I saw nobody; I was told that Girindranath was performing the Shraddha. When all this confusion had subsided after midday, I went with Shyamacharan Bhattacharya and a few Brâhmas to my marble-floored room down below, and read the *Kathopanishat*; for it is written in the *Kathopanishat* that whosoever shall read this *Upanishat* at the time of Shraddha shall thereby reap fruit everlasting. Nothing further transpired that day. Friends, relations, and distant connections, every one that had come from far and near partook of the feast and went their ways. Next day no relatives came to the appointed feast. They all deserted me. My uncle, my first cousins, and my four aunts remained on my side. Each of them lived in separate houses,

so that the others were not able to ostracise me, and I could not be boycotted.

I said to Girindranath, "What have you gained by performing the Shraddha? Nobody has recognised it as valid, yet you have broken your pledge. Those whom you sought to please by acting against your religion nevertheless did not partake of the caste dinner." Prasanna Kumar Tagore sent me word to say, "If Devendra never acts thus again, we shall all accept his invitation." I replied, "If that could be, then why should I have made all this fuss? I can never again join hands with idolatry." This was the first instance of a Shraddha being performed without idolatry in accordance with the rites of Brâhma Dharma. Friends and relatives forsook me, but God drew me nearer to Himself. I gained satisfaction of spirit at the triumph of Dharma. And that was all I wanted.

CHAPTER XVI

My father's first visit to Europe was in the month of December (A.D. 1841). He then owned large zemindaries situated in the districts of Hughli, Pabna, Rajshahi, Cuttack, Midnapur, Rungpur, Tipperah, etc., and carried on an extensive business in indigo factories, saltpetre, sugar, and tea. In addition to all these, coal-mines were being worked in Ranigunj. Our worldly prosperity was then at its zenith. His keen intelligence made it clear to him that should the management of these extensive affairs devolve upon us in the future we would not be able to cope with them. If the commercial concerns failed through us, our large self-acquired zemindaries would also be lost with them, and our ancestral estates, Berahimpur and Cuttack, would meet with a like fate. A failure of his business transactions would lead to the loss of the property of our forefathers also; this was the anxiety that preyed upon his mind. Therefore in A.D. 1840, before going to Europe, he drew up a trust-deed; and joining to our ancestral zemindaries of Berahimpur and Cuttack his self-acquired property,

Dihi Shahazadpur and Pargana Kaligram, he made over these four estates into the hands of three trustees. All the property was vested in them, we being the beneficiaries. This act of his testified to his love for us, as well as to his keen foresight.

Six months after his return from his first visit to Europe he made a will, in the month of Bhadra 1765, (A.D. 1843), dividing all his property equally amongst us three brothers. The family ancestral house was allotted to me, the three-storied *Baithakkhana* house to my second brother Girindranath, and the entire open space to the west of our family dwelling-house to my youngest brother Nagendranath, together with a sum of Rs. 20,000 for building a house. My father had a half-share in our firm of Carr, Tagore & Co., and the shareholders of the other half were certain Englishmen; I had a one-anna share in the concern. My father had bequeathed his half-share in this business to me alone, but I did not keep it only for myself; we three brothers divided it equally between us.

Girindranath had a very good head for business. One day, after he had become a partner in the firm, he made the following proposal to me: "Since the entire capital in the firm is ours, why should we share the profits with these English people? Why not take the whole business into our hands?" This idea did not commend itself to me. I said, "This is not a sound proposal. The energy and strength of

purpose with which the English are now working, knowing themselves to be partners, will not be brought to bear on our undertakings if they are deprived of their rights. We shall never be able to manage this extensive business alone; they are absolutely necessary for carrying on the work. As partners they certainly have a share in the profits; but in the event of loss they have to bear that as well. Whereas, if instead of remaining partners they were to become paid servants, we should be obliged to pay their big salaries anyhow, whilst they would not take the same interest in the well-being of the firm as they are taking now. Therefore I do not approve of your proposal." "But," he argued, "the *Sahibs* have no separate property or assets of their own. Should our firm ever come to grief, then the creditors will fall on us alone; it is our property that will be seized, it will be for us to settle all accounts, and our estates will have to be sold in payment of all debts. They share the profits now, but in time of loss they will have no loss to bear. They will go away after enjoying the profits, whilst we will go on counting our losses and sacrificing all we possess. Look at what is happening even now. All our zemindary money is being poured into the firm; the more money we give the hungrier it becomes, nothing can satisfy its ferocious craving. But the English partners do not contribute a single pice." Upon hearing him speak thus I praised his talent for

business, and gave him entire control over the firm, thus also getting ample leisure myself for work in the Brâhma-Samaj.

We three brothers now became the sole proprietors of the whole firm. We engaged the services of our former English partners; some on Rs. 1000, some on Rs. 2000 a month, according to their respective shares. They had to agree to this arrangement, and each took up his former duties. Thus the re-modelling of the firm of Carr, Tagore & Co. was effected in accordance with Girindranath's proposal. My approbation encouraged him, so that he began to look after the affairs of the firm with interest, to the best of his abilities.

CHAPTER XVII

We learnt from the teachings of the Upanishad that the *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda*, *Atharvaveda*, and *Śiksha*, *Kalpa*, *Vyākaraṇa*, *Nirukta*, *Chhanda*,[1] all these were inferior branches of knowledge; while that knowledge alone was the highest by which the supreme Brahma could be known. With deep reverence we accepted this doctrine. It was in perfect accord with our own aim and object. With the view of proclaiming this object to the general public we began to publish the following Vedic verse as a heading, from the first number of the second series of the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*:

Inferior are the Vedas, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda; also Śikshā, Kalpa, Vyākaraṇa, Nirukta, and Chhanda;
Supreme is that knowledge which leads to the Eternal One.

When we came to know from this that there were two kinds of knowledge in the Vedas, *Parâvidyâ* and *Aparâvidyâ*,[2] we became anxious to search the

[1] *Śikshā* is the science of pronunciation; *Kalpa*, a ceremonial directory, comprising rules relating to the Vedic ritual and sacrifices; *Vyākaraṇa*, grammar; *Nirukta*, the exposition of difficult Vedic words; *Chhanda*, metre.

[2] Supreme or absolute knowledge and lower contingent knowledge.

Vedas in order to find out in detail what was the subject-matter of the inferior knowledge, and what of the supreme knowledge. I myself prepared to go to Benares. Accompanied by Lalla Hazarilal, I set out for Benares by stages in a palanquin in the month of October (A.D. 1847). We arrived there after a tedious and troublesome journey of fourteen days. I took up my abode in the Mânmandir,[1] on the banks of the Ganges. The students I had sent were greatly delighted to have me there with them. They related to me what progress they had made in their studies, and gave me all the news of Benares. I said to them, "I must hold a meeting here, and invite all the leading Brâhmans and shastris of Benares who are versed in the Vedas. I want to hear all the Vedas, and to understand their meaning. Ramanath, you ask your Rigveda Guru to invite the Rigvedi Brâhmans of Benares. Baneshwar, you ask your Yajurveda Guru to invite the Yajurvedi Brâhmans of Benares. Taraknath, you ask your Samaveda Guru to invite the Samavedi Brâhmans; Ananda Chandra, you ask your Atharvaveda Guru to invite the Atharvavedi Brâhmans of Benares." Thus all the Brâhmans were invited.

A rumour spread in the city that some pious devotee had come from Bengal, who wished to hear all the Vedas. The Pândâ[2] of Vis'wes'war[3] came

[1] An old Hindu observatory.

[2] Temple guide. [3] Lord of the universe.

to me, and begged me to accompany him to the temple of Vis'wes'war. I said, "Here I am already in the temple of Vis'wes'war; where else need I go?" On the morning of the third day after my arrival at Benares, the spacious hall of the Mânmandir was filled with Brâhmans. I seated them in four rows,—one for the Rigveda, two for the Yajurveda, and one for the Atharvaveda. There were only two Samavedi boys; these I seated by my side. They were quite young *brâhmacharis*,[1] still wearing rings in their ears, which become their faces well.

Baneshwar carried the cup containing sandal-wood paste, Taraknath carried the flower-garlands, Ramanath carried the wearing apparel, and Ananda Chandra carried Rs. 500. As soon as Baneshwar put the sandal-paste mark on a Brâhman's forehead, Taraknath decorated him with a garland of flowers; after which Ramanath gave him a linen *dhuti*,[2] and lastly, Ananda Chandra put two rupees into his hand. Thus every Brâhman received a mark, a garland, a *dhuti*, and money. The Brâhmans were delighted with this homage, and exclaimed, "Lo, how full of piety is this *Yajman*![3] Nobody has ever done such a thing in Benares."

"Sanctify me now by reciting the Vedas, I pray you," said I to them with due humility. The

[1] Lit. seekers after God; novices.
[2] Waist-cloth. [3] Disciple.

Rigvedi Brâhmans repeated, *Agnîmide Purohitam*, etc., all together in a loud voice with great fervour. Then the Yajurvedis began the Yajurveda. As soon as they commenced to recite *Ishetwâ urjetwâ*, etc., one of the Brâhmans cried out, "The *Yajman* has insulted me." I asked wherein lay the insult. He said, "The Black Yajur is the older Yajur, yet precedence has not been given to it; it has not been recited first, we have been insulted." I said, "You had better settle this matter between yourselves amicably." A quarrel then ensued between the two factions as to who should recite first. When I saw there was no chance of their quarrel coming to an end I proposed that both parties should recite at the same time. At this they were pleased, and both sides began to recite loudly and confusedly, so that nothing could be made out. Then I said, "Now that the honour of both has been satisfied, let one side stop, and the other begin," upon which, first the White Yajur, and then the Black Yajur was recited. It took a long time to recite the Yajurveda. The Samavedi boys were eager to chant the Sâma hymns. They became restless at the delay in the recital of the Yajurveda. As soon as it was over they looked at me, and I asked them to recite. Immediately, both of them commenced the Sâma chant, *Indra âyâhi*, etc., in a melodious voice. Such sweet chanting of the Sâma I had never heard before. Last

of all the Atharvavedis recited, and the assembly broke up.

After the meeting was over the Brâhmans were kind enough to say to me, "May it please the *Yajman* to give a feast to the Brâhmans? We shall all eat together in a garden." Before I could say anything in reply, Taraknath whispered in my ear to me, "A feast to these Brâhmans, indeed! We shall have to provide everything, and they will each mark out a square in a plot of ground, and have separate meals. What is that to us? It is not as if it was like our own Brâhman feasts, where we cook for them all and they all eat together." Another Brâhman came and said to me, "We shall soon celebrate a sacrifice (*yajna*) here, if you care to come and see it." I said it was for this that I had come here. He said, "Animals are not killed in our sacrifice. We perform the *yajna* by making animals of flour paste." From another side some Brâhmans cried out, "What kind of *yajna* is that in which animals are not killed? It is said in the Vedas, *śvetam âlabheta*, white goats must be sacrificed." I found that even in the matter of sacrifice there were different factions. However, the Brâhmans went away pleased.

A holy Brâhman of the place came at noon, bringing with him rice and vegetables for my midday meal. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon the learned *shastris* of Benares again came to the

Mânmandir for discussion of the *shastras*. The *jnanakânda*[1] and *karmakânda*[2] of the Vedas and other *shastras* were argued upon in this assembly. In the course of conversation I asked them, "Is the killing of animals at sacrifices sanctioned in the Vedas?" They replied, that without killing animals no *yajna* (sacrifice) could ever be performed. Whilst I was thus discussing the *shastras* with these pundits, a Babu from the Benares Raja's palace (by Babu must be understood a blood relation of the Raja) came to me and said, "The Maharaja wishes to see you." I accepted this invitation. The meeting was then dissolved, and the *shastris* went home after receiving parting gifts of money. One of them said, "We have accepted your gifts with great satisfaction. The accepting of gifts from a *sudra* in Benares makes one's hair stand on end."

The next day the Babu came, and took me with him to Ramnagar on the opposite bank. The Raja was then not at home. The Babu began to show me all the treasures of the Raja. The rooms were as crowded as a shop, with pictures, mirrors, chandeliers, carpets and hangings, tables and chairs. Whilst I was looking round, I saw before me two *bandis*[3] singing the Raja's praises, in a very sweet voice. By this I knew he had arrived. As soon as he came in he welcomed me warmly, and took me to

[1] Chapter of knowledge. [2] Chapter of works.
[3] Slaves or bondmen.

his audience hall. Singing and dancing immediately began there. He presented me with a diamond ring, which I accepted with due deference, and took my leave of him. He said, "It has given me great pleasure to meet you. You must be sure to come to the Ramlila on the tenth day of the moon." I made my bow to him and returned to Benares at sunset.

I went to Ramnagar again on the Ramlila day, and found the Raja smoking the hookah seated on a big elephant. Behind him on a small elephant was his hookah-bearer holding a hookah set with diamonds. On another elephant sat the Rajaguru (religious preceptor of the Raja) dressed in the ascetic's brick-coloured robe, and silent. He had his tongue encased in wood, lest he should speak. Even in this he could not rely upon himself. Colonels, generals, and commanding officers surrounded the Raja on all sides, each on his own elephant. I also got an elephant to ride on, and we all started for the scene of the Ramlila. On arriving at the *mela* we found crowds and crowds of people, just like another Benares. In one place a throne-like seat had been erected, which was decorated all over with flowers, and above this was a canopy. On this throne was seated a boy, bow and arrow in hand. The people kept going up to him and bowing down at his feet. On this occasion it was he that was Ramachandra, king of Ayodhya. A little

farther on was the battlefield. On one side were some figures representing *rakshasas*, with the heads of camels, horses, or goats. They were standing in rows and consulting with each other, the horse's face next to the cow's ear, the camel's face next to the goat's ear, and so on; they were whispering to one another. A great council of war was apparently being held. After a time a bomb fell in their midst, and fireworks began on all sides. I left the place quietly.

From Benares I went by boat as far as Mirzapur, seeing the Vindhya ranges on the way. Words cannot express the joy and uplifting of spirit I felt on seeing even those small Vindhya hills. I wandered about from early morning till midday and, burning with hunger and thirst, returned to the boat, where I drank a little milk and felt revived. In the Vindhyâchala I saw both the Yogamâyâ and Bhogamâyâ.[1] The Yogamâyâ was ten-handed, and carved in stone. Not a single pilgrim, not a soul was to be seen there. On going to the temple of Bhogamâyâ I found it as crowded as Kalighat; Hindustanis,[2] wearing red turbans and marks of red sandal on the forehead and garlands of *java* flowers, were sacrificing goats with much splashing of blood. This appeared to me to be a strange thing. I could

[1] Different images of the goddess—the first representing renunciation, and the second life in the world.

[2] The term used by Bengalis to designate Upper India Hindus.

not elbow my way to the temple through that crowd, so I saw what I could from some distance.

I then returned home by steamer from Mirzapur. I first came as far as Kumarkhali, taking Ananda Chandra with me on the way from Benares. After inspecting my zemindary there I came back home to Calcutta. The other students followed shortly after, and devoted themselves to the work of the Samaj. Lala Hazarilal set forth from Benares with nothing in his pocket, to preach in distant lands. All that he possessed was a single ring, on which was engraved in Hindi, "Even this will not remain." Thus he departed, never to return; and I did not see him again.

CHAPTER XVIII

I WAS now thoroughly convinced that the subject-matter of the inferior knowledge in the Vedas was the various sacrifices in honour of the gods. The *hota* of the Rigveda praises the gods, the *adhyaryu* of the Yajurveda offers *ghee* to the gods, and the *udgala* of the Samaveda sings the glory of the gods at the time of sacrifice. In the Vedas there are in all thirty-three gods, chief amongst whom are Agni, Indra, Marut, Surya, and Usha.[1] Agni is present in all the Vedic rites—without him no Vedic *yajna* can be performed. The god Agni is not only to be worshipped at the sacrifice, he is also the priest of the sacrifice. As the priest of the Raja obtains for him the benefits of the sacrifice, so does Agni himself, acting as priest of the sacrifice, perform the *homa*.[2] It is Agni that distributes amongst the gods the *ghee* that is given to them in their respective names. Therefore he is not only the priest, he is also the agent of the gods. And like a treasurer Agni dis-

[1] Agni, fire; Indra, the heavens; Marut, the wind; Surya, the sun; Usha, the dawn.

[2] Homa, the fire ritual.

tributes amongst the worshippers the fruit gained by each through his oblation to each god. The god Agni's duties are manifold, and in the Veda he reigns supreme. Again, you will observe that without him none of our domestic rites can be performed. From the birth ceremony up to the funeral and Shraddha ceremonies, on all occasions there must be Agni. He is the witness of marriage. The *sudra* has no right to the Vedas, yet he must have Agni as a witness to marriage, to whom he has to offer *ghee* without repeating any *mantras*.

I did not know before that the god Agni held such supremacy amongst us. From my childhood I had seen that nothing could be done without the *Shaligram*. In marriage and other ceremonies, at all pujas and religious festivals, you must have the *Shaligram*; it is our household god. Having seen the *Shaligram* everywhere, I had thought it alone reigned supreme. And having given up the *Shaligram* and the worship of Kali and Durga, I thought we had done with idolatry. But now I saw there were many idols such as Agni, Vayu, Indra, Surya, etc., who had no hands and feet and bodies, yet were perceptible by the senses. Their power was felt by all. The Vaidiks believed that if these were not propitiated all creation would be destroyed by excess or want of rain, by the fierce heat of the sun, or the tempestuous whirlwind. In their propitiation lay the well-being of the universe; in their wrath its

destruction. Hence Agni, Vayu, Indra, and Surya are worshipped as gods in the Vedas. Kali, Durga, Rama, Krishna, are all modern divinities of the Tantras and Puranas. Agni, Vayu, Indra, and Surya, these are the ancient Vedic gods, and the pomp and circumstance of sacrifice concern them alone. Therefore I was obliged to give up altogether the hope of propagating the worship of Brahma by means of the Vedas which sanction the *Karmakanda*.[1]

We now turned from the Vedas and became *Veda-sannyasi* householders.[2] Agni also no longer retained a predominant place in our domestic ceremonies, as prescribed in the Vedas. But the *Brâhmavadi*[3] sages of old used to become all-renouncing *sannyasis*. After giving up the sacrificial ceremonies they could no longer remain at home; but disgusted with the elaborate rites of the *yajnas*, so contrary to wisdom, and desirous of salvation, they betook themselves to the forest. There they became one with that Brahma who is dearer than son, dearer than all riches. They gave up worshipping material gods. The Upanishad is the Upanishad of the forest; in the forest was it composed, in the forest was it preached, in the forest was it taught. It was forbidden even to read it in the house. The Upanishad came to our hands in the very beginning.

[1] Ceremonial rites and observances.

[2] Living the life of a householder but freed from worldly desires.

[3] Proclaimers of Brahma.

But even the Vedic sages also were far from being satisfied in their hearts with sacrificing to such finite deities as Agni, Vayu, etc. In their midst also arose the question, Where did these gods come from? The mystery of the universe began to be seriously discussed amongst them. They said, "Who knows for certain whence came this wondrous creation? Who has ever told us here whence all these things were born? The gods were born after the creation; then who knows from whom this universe has sprung?" The Rishis, being unable to fathom the mystery of creation, and being filled with unrest and plunged in the darkness of dejection, devoted themselves with great intensity and singleness of purpose to the gaining of enlightenment. Then the God of gods, the Supreme Spirit revealed Himself in the pure hearts of these steadfast and dispassionate Rishis, and gave out the light of truth which passeth all understanding, whereby the Rishis were satisfied in mind and glad at heart, and they understood whence came this creation and who was its creator. Then they fervently expressed themselves in this hymn of the Rigveda. Before creation "there was then neither death nor immortal life. There was no day and night, neither was there knowledge. Then that One alone existed, animated by His own power. Naught existed but Him, this present universe was not."

Those Rishis who came to know Brahma by dint

of meditation and the grace of God thus expressed His truths :

> He who gives life, He who gives strength, He whose commands the whole universe obeys, together with the gods ; whose shadow is immortality, whose shadow is death, who else is the God to whom we shall offer our oblations ? You know not Him who has created all these things, who dwelleth within your hearts distinct from all else.

How indeed should they know when they all wander about enveloped in the mist of ignorance, engaged in wrangling, satisfied with the pleasures of the senses, and guided by the sacrificial *mantras* ? The seeking after Brahma, the knowledge of Brahma, the truths relating to Brahma, see how brightly these things shine forth in the ancient Rigveda and Yajurveda. Strange to say, the profoundest sayings of the Upanishads are contained in the ancient Vedas, and it is these that constitute the glory of the Upanishads. The texts, "Brahma is Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite," and "The two birds closely united in friendship" (*i.e.* the body and the soul) of the Upanishads, are all to be found in the Rigveda, and have been extracted from it by the Upanishads. Should all else in the Vedas die, yet these truths will never die.

This stream of truth, flowing onwards, flooded and purified and ennobled the lives of the Rishis of the Upanishads. Their lives were built up out of these truths. Through these they tasted of immortality, and advanced on the path of salvation. It

was owing to the influence of these truths that they exclaimed out of the fulness of their hearts :

I have come to know that sublime and shining Being beyond the confines of darkness.

The worshipper overcomes death by knowing Him alone ; besides this there is no other way of attaining salvation.

I learnt that this was the supreme knowledge, and it had for its subject the Absolute Brahma *Ekamevâ dvitîyam.*

CHAPTER XIX

On my return from Benares I found that our firm, Carr, Tagore & Co., was in a tottering condition. Bills of exchange were coming in, but the money to meet them was hard to find. We had to provide the money daily with the utmost difficulty. How long could such a state of things continue? Meantime one day a bill for Rs. 30,000 fell due, money for which was not forthcoming. The day drew near to its close, but the money could not be raised. The holder of the draft took it back and went away without the money. The firm of Carr, Tagore & Co. thenceforth lost its credit, and the office doors were closed.

The month of March A.D. 1847 saw the downfall of Carr, Tagore & Co.'s business. I was then thirty years old. A meeting of all the creditors was called by the advice of the head-assistant, D. M. Gordon; and three days after the winding-up of the business, they all assembled in a room on the third story of the building. D. M. Gordon had prepared an account of our assets and liabilities, which he placed

before the meeting. In it was shown that the total liabilities of our firm amounted to one crore of rupees; the total money due, realisable, was seventy lakhs; there was, therefore, a deficit of thirty lakhs. He said to those assembled: "The proprietors of the firm are willing to make up the deficit by adding their own personal property. Take all the dues and assets of the firm, together with the zemindaries belonging to the proprietors under your control, and satisfy your respective dues. But there is a trust-property which does not belong to them of right; this property only you will not be able to touch."

While Gordon was thus addressing the meeting, I said to Girindranath: "Mr. Gordon is warning the creditors that nobody can touch our trust-property. At this juncture we ought to come forward and say that although the trust-property cannot be sold up in payment of our liabilities, yet we are ready to break up the trust, and give up even this property in order to clear off our debts. The best thing we can do is to adopt such means as will enable us to free ourselves entirely from our paternal debts. If these cannot be liquidated by the sale of our properties, then the trust-property must be sold too."

The creditors, on the other hand, were beginning to show signs of dissatisfaction on hearing that they were debarred from laying hands on a certain portion

of the estate. But when at the next moment they heard that we were prepared to give all our property together with the trust-property into their hands, of our own free will, without the least compulsion, and independently of any decree of the law-courts, they were astounded. At this proposal of ours we saw that many kindly-disposed creditors were moved to tears. They too were grieved at our impending misfortune. They saw that we had no hand in the rise and fall of the firm, that we were innocent and not to blame. We were so young, and this terrible misfortune had befallen us. To-day all this wealth and property was ours, to-morrow not a vestige of it would remain. This was the thought that filled them with pity. Far from being irritated at their loss, their hearts were melting with pity. Whence did this pity enter into their hearts at this moment? He alone inspired them with compassion Who is my lifelong Friend. They proposed that, as we had resigned all claims, we should get an annual allowance of Rs. 25,000 out of the estate for our maintenance. Thus a friendly feeling was established between debtors and creditors. Not one of them commenced legal proceedings in order to realise their dues. They took the whole of our property into their own hands, and formed a committee of their principal men to manage it. A secretary to that committee was appointed at a salary of Rs. 1000. Under him were placed other assistants. They carried on

business under the name of "Carr, Tagore & Co. in liquidation."

The meeting broke up after our creditors had established their claim to all our property. We two brothers set out on our way home. While driving back I said to Girindranath, "We have just performed the *Vishvajit Yajna*, by giving up everything." "Yes," said he, "now let every one know that we have kept nothing for ourselves; let them say, they have given all they possessed." I said, "What if people say so? The law-courts will not listen to them. Whenever anybody files a plaint in court we shall have to swear that we have given everything, we have nothing left. Otherwise the law will not let us off. But as long as we have a shred of cloth left on our bodies, we cannot stand up in a court of justice and solemnly affirm that we have given everything. As it is, we will give up everything, but we cannot take our oath upon it. May God and Righteousness protect us. May I never have to pass through the insolvency court." Thus conversing, we reached home.

Things turned out just as I wished; all our property went out of my hands. As in my mind there was no desire for the things of this world, so too no worldly goods were now mine; like unto like, both sides were balanced.

In that desire, may there be no other prayer but the prayer for lightning.

Then if lightning were to fall and destroy my hoard and harvest I should not be surprised.

If, whilst I was praying thus for lightning, lightning came and consumed everything, then what would there be to wonder at? What I had said was, "O Lord, I want nothing but Thee!" He has graciously accepted my prayer, and revealing Himself unto me, wrenched away everything else. "Not a farthing's worth of sugar have I, O Lord, on which to have a drink of water."[1] What I had prayed for was granted and realised.

That was a day of days at the burning-ground, and this day was just such another. I had taken another step forward. I reduced my staff of servants, sent all my horses and carriages to be auctioned, brought my food and clothing within reasonable bounds—became a *sannyasi* without leaving home. I took no thought for what I should eat and how I should clothe myself on the morrow. Nor did I trouble myself as to whether to-morrow I should stay in this house or have to leave it. I became totally free from all desire. I had read in the Upanishads about the peace and happiness of him who desires nothing; and now I tasted of it in real life. As the moon is freed from Rahu,[2] so did my soul become free from the things of the world, and feel

[1] Water is not supposed to be wholesome taken by itself, so something sweet is taken before a drink.

[2] Rahu is a trunkless demon who periodically tries to swallow the moon but cannot retain it. This is the cause of eclipses.

the heaven of Brahma. "O Lord in the midst of untold wealth my soul was in agony, not having found Thee,—now, finding Thee, I have found everything."

At this time I used to remain absorbed in thought upon deep philosophic doctrines from morning till noon. From noon till evening I would be engaged in studying the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Mahabharata, and such-like *shastras*, and in translating the Rigveda into Bengali. In the evening I used to sit on the terrace on a broad blanket. There Brâhmas, seekers after Brahma, and earnest seekers after the truth would come and sit by me and discuss various *shastras*. These discussions were sometimes carried on till after midnight. I also looked over the articles for the *Tatwabodhini Patrika* at this time.

Three or four months after the dissolution of our firm, Girindranath said to me one day, "Time is passing, but the debts are not being paid off at all. The *sahibs* (Englishmen) are only sitting idle and drawing their pay. There is no hope of our debts being cleared at this rate. If we go on like this even the sale of our homestead would not enable us to deliver ourselves from these debts. I wish therefore to make this proposal to the committee of creditors, that if they would entrust us with the management of our own affairs, we could devise some means of paying off the debts before very long, by our own efforts and without much

cost." I thought this an excellent proposal, and shortly after we brought it forward at a meeting of the creditors. They agreed to it gladly and trustfully. Then we took the management into our own hands, transferred the office to our house, and engaged an English manager and a clerk. Thus did we begin to reel up the string of Carr, Tagore & Co.'s kite from the watch-tower of our own house. Whether it would snap half-way or not was the question.

CHAPTER XX

Out of the four students who had been sent to Benares to collect and learn the Vedas, Ananda Chandra Bhattacharya returned with me to Calcutta after having studied of the Upanishads, *Katha*, *Pras'na*, *Mundaka*, *Chhândogya*, *Talavakâra*, *Svetâs'-vatara*, *Vâjasaneya*, and part of *Vrihadâranyaka*; of the Vedangas *Nirukta* and *Chhanda*; of the Vedanta philosophy the annotated *Sutrabhâshya*, *Vedanta Paribhâsha*, *Vedantasâra*, *Adhikaranamâlâ*, *Siddhan-talesha*, *Panchadas'î*, and the annotated *Gitâbhâshya*; of the *Karmamimâmsâ* the *Tatwakaumudi*. Of the other three, the Rigvedi student, Ramānatha Bhattacharya, had finished as far as the third chapter of the seventh *Ashtaka* of the Rigveda Samhitâ, together with the sixth chapter of the first *Ashtaka* of its commentary. The Yajurvedic student, Baneshwar Bhattacharya, had learnt thirty-one chapters of the *Madhyandina Samhitâ*; the second chapter of the *Taittiriya Samhitâ*; thirteen chapters of the first part of *Kanwa Bhâshya*, and twenty-five chapters of its second part. The Samavedi student, Taranath

Bhattacharya, had studied of the Samaveda thirty-six *Sâmas* of the *Veyagâna*, the fourth *Prapâthaka* of the *Aranyagâna*, the seventh part of the *Uhagâna*, the third *Suktabhâshya* of the sixth part of the *Uttara-bhâshya*; and the *Karmamimâmsâ*; of philosophy up to the *Jatikhandana* of *Shastradîpikâ*. Of these four men, judging Ananda Chandra to be well versed in the *shastras*, and possessed of a reverential and devotional spirit, I gave him the title of Vedântavâgish, and appointed him to the post of *Upâchârya*[1] of the Brâhma-Samaj.

The study of the Vedas led me to believe that it was not the actual moon, sun, wind, and fire alone that the sages of old worshipped. It was that one Great God whom they worshipped under the forms of Agni, Vayu, and many others. So we find in the Rigveda:

> One is He, but the Brâhmans call Him variously, Agni, Yami, Vayu.

So also in the Yajurveda:

> He Himself is all the gods.

It was with regard to this Vedic text that I had stated in the preface of the Rigveda translation: "That Being, whoever He may be, dwelling in the sun, is the Sun-god. That Being, whoever He may be, dwelling in the wind, is the Wind-god. That Being, whoever He may be, dwelling in the fire, is

[1] Minister.

the Fire-god." This means, not that the Vaidiks worship the outward material sun, etc., but they worship the sentient spirit dwelling within. There is a vast difference between the gods of the Tantras and Puranas and the gods of the Vedas. But the common run of people in this country do not recognise this difference. They believe that the worship of Kali and Durga is inculcated in the Vedas. With a view to dispel these false ideas, and to acquire a knowledge of the gradual evolution of our ancient manners, customs, and religion, I set to work to translate the Rigveda with the help of a pundit from Benares. The first half of the original text of the Rigveda had been procured by the Sabha, and of the commentaries enough had been obtained to enable us to proceed with the work of translation for the present. But this was a stupendous task. In the Samhitâ alone there were more than 10,000 verses. I despaired of ever being able to finish it. However I went on translating as much as I could and publishing it in the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*.

Hitherto these two great texts only had found a place in the Brâhma-Samaj form of worship :

> Brahma is Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite,
> Whose manifestation is Eternal Bliss : it shineth forth.

This was incomplete. By the addition of "Full of peace and beatitude ; without a second," they were made complete. In the year 1770 (A.D. 1848), three years after the introduction of the Samaj form

of worship, I added "Full of peace and beatitude; without a second."

He who is the presiding Deity of our soul, and who ever instils into it all wisdom and spirituality, He is "Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite, Brahma." We realise Him in our hearts. When we see this "Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite, Brahma" in the midst of the beauty of this universe situated in boundless space, then we see that "That whose manifestation is eternal bliss shineth forth." He shines forth as the embodiment of bliss and immortality. That self-existent Supreme Soul is without, even as He is within. Again He is "without and within us, yet He exists in Himself," and is ever conscious of His blessed will that all may be elevated in wisdom and righteousness, love and goodness. He is "full of peace and beatitude; without a second."

Seekers after God must realise Brahma in these three places. They must see Him within, see Him without, and see Him in that abode of Brahma where He exists in Himself. When we see Him within our soul we say, "Thou art the innermost soul of the soul; Thou art my father, Thou art my friend, Thou art my comrade." When we see Him without us, we say, "Thy royal throne is in the infinite sky." When we see Him in Himself, see the supreme Truth in His own sanctuary, then we say, "Thou art in Thine own Self Supreme Goodness and Peace; One without a second."

We cannot think all these things at the same time. Sometimes we think of Him in our soul, sometimes we think of Him as being outside us, sometimes we think of Him as He exists in Himself. But that Being who is life without breath, that eternally wakeful Being, at one and the same time dwells within Himself, calm and serene, ever conscious of His own supreme goodness; inspires our hearts with wisdom and righteousness; and in the outer world dispenses all things desired by His creatures. "Through countless ages He is ever the same, the Eternal NOW." "Who can describe His infinite glory, the recital of whose praise taxes the powers of the *Sruti*,[1] *Smriti*[2] and *Darsanas*?"[3] By His grace I have now come to believe that the Yogi[4] who can see this trinity of His at one and the same time, and see that while existing in Himself He exists in the hearts of us all, while existing in Himself He exists outside us all, and exists in Himself, self-contained and self-conscious, time without end, he is the true Yogi. Realising His love, he offers his life and mind and love and devotion and all things to Him, and bearing His commandments aloft with dauntless spirit strives to please Him in all his actions. He is the foremost amongst those that worship Brahma.

[1] Vedas. [2] Puranas. [3] Philosophical schools.
[4] One who has attained union with the Supreme Soul.

CHAPTER XXI

About this time, in the month of Ashwin[1] 1770 (A.D. 1848), I went for a trip up the Damodar river taking a few friends with me. After winding along its bends for seven days, we moored our boat on one of its sand-banks one afternoon at 4 o'clock. There we heard that Burdwan was close by, only four miles off. I was at once seized with a curiosity to see it. I landed immediately and waded through four miles of sand to Burdwan. Rajnarayan Babu and one or two others were with me. When we reached the town, lamps were burning in all the houses and shops. We wandered about here and there, saw the town, the bazar, the palace. It seemed to me from outside the glass windows that the Raja was sitting in one of the rooms of the palace, lit with candles. After having satisfied our curiosity, we returned to the boat through that sand-bank. It was then late at night. Probably Rajnarayan Babu had never walked so much before. He could hardly keep up with us. With the greatest difficulty he managed to reach

[1] September–October.

the boat, and then lay down ; I found he had got fever.

The next day, in the early hours of the morning, I bathed in the sacred stream of the Damodar bright with the rays of the rising sun, put on a blue silk robe[1] and purified myself by performing the daily worship. All of a sudden I beheld a beautiful phaeton coming along the *char*, raising clouds of sand all around. On that mere camel's route, was it possible for a carriage to progress, or for horses to gallop ? I could not make out whither they were bound through this sandy tract. Then I saw the carriage stop in front of my boat. A man jumped down from the coach-box, and asked to see me. I called him and asked what he wanted. With folded hands he said, "The Maharajadhiraj of Burdwan desires greatly to see you, and has sent this carriage. I hope you will kindly comply with his wishes." I said that I had set out to see the river, the woods, and the hills ; visiting the Raja was altogether beyond my programme ; that I had come up by the river, and would go back by the river, and would not go on land again. He said, "If I fail to take you with me, the Maharaja will hold me very much to blame. Do me the favour to come and see the Raja once. You are sure to be much pleased when you discover how great is his regard for you. I will not go back without you." I yielded at last to his eager

[1] The Hindu custom is to worship attired in silk robes.

entreaties. I started for Burdwan after my midday meal, and arrived there at the close of day.

A well-furnished dwelling had been placed at my disposal. There the chief officials of the Raja gathered round me—his Govinda Banerjee and Kirti Chatterjee all came. From my house to the palace a sort of post was laid to enquire from moment to moment what I was doing and what I was saying. Next morning three or four bullock-carts loaded with rice, *dal*,[1] flour, and other articles of food were brought to my house. I asked the men why there was such a quantity of things. They said that rations on a scale appointed for the Rajaguru[2] had been sent to me by the Maharaja. At noon a carriage and pair pulled up at my door. I got in and drove to the palace. I saw the Raja, who received me with great cordiality. He was then playing billiards, and everybody was walking round with him. I too joined in the fun of their game. He made me sit down on a raised seat. Seeing him so gentle and unassuming and so kind to me, I too felt drawn towards him.

Thus did I become acquainted with him, and gradually his zeal for Brâhmaism went on increasing. At my suggestion he set up a Brâhma-Samaj in the palace building. I sent Shyamacharan Bhattacharya and Taraknath Bhattacharya to the Raja in order to give him religious instruction and

[1] Pulse. [2] Chief priest.

to conduct the service in this Brâhma-Samaj. After this I constantly went to Burdwan, and encouraged him and conversed with him on religious topics. He too was greatly pleased to have me with him. On whatever occasion I went there, whether for his birthday or for his picnics, we were sure to have prayers together. His heart was amply furnished with faith and reverence alike. One evening during worship he gave vent to his feelings as follows: "How ungrateful I am! He has given me so much wealth yet I am not sufficiently grateful to Him for it, I do not think of Him. But how very many poor and humble creatures have received so little from Him, yet are so grateful to Him, and worship Him. How ungrateful I am! how degraded!" With these words he began to shed tears.

One day he took me into the ladies' quarters. There was a tank there, pointing to which he said, "We sit here and fish." He then took me upstairs. There I saw a room spread with a gold-embroidered *muslund*,[1] and decorated just as on the occasion of a wedding in the house. He said, "Here we sit." Taking me into another room he said, "From here the Rani can see me playing billiards." From all that I saw and heard in the inner apartments, it appeared to me that the Rani was as happy with the Raja as he was with her:

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[1] Velvet carpet.

The husband made happy by the wife, and the wife likewise by the husband.

One day the Raja said to me, "I have a favour to ask of you which you must grant me." I wonder what he will say, I thought to myself; and asked him what it was. He said, "You must take the trouble of giving a sitting; I wish to have your portrait painted." A capable English artist had then come to his house, and he painted my portrait. That likeness of myself as I was then is still in his room. Raja Mahatab Chand is now no more, his son Aftab Chand too died at an early age. But his Brâhma-Samaj still exists. A priest still makes the name of Brahma regularly resound there, but there is none to listen to him. The presiding deity of that empty prayer-hall is its only light.

One day, as I was going for a drive in Calcutta, a man came and gave me a letter on the way. On opening it I found it was from Raja Srish Chandra of Krishnagar. He wrote to say, "I shall be glad if you will meet me at the Town Hall to-morrow at 5 o'clock." The next day at 5 I went to the Town Hall, and after a short time the Raja came. I was greatly pleased to meet him. His conversation with me turned wholly on religious matters. When on the point of leaving he said, "I have not been satisfied with such a short interview. I shall be in Calcutta three or four days longer; if you come to my house on one of these days in the evening and

talk to me I shall be delighted." He felt rather awkward about meeting me in public. I was a leader of the Brâhma-Samaj, a Brâhma; and he was Lord of Navadvipa, head of the orthodox community.

This was our first meeting; of his own accord he came and made my acquaintance. I had founded a Brâhma-Samaj in Krishnagar, and used to go there frequently. He had become anxious to meet me through hearing about me from others, and reading my sermons and other writings. One evening I went to his palace to see him. He took me upstairs to his terrace, where there was no one else. Not a single light was there. He sat down at once on the floor. I also did the same. We got on as easily as two *fakirs*. He said:

God is one, and immanent in all created things. The ordainer of Karma, dwelling in all created things, omniscient, all perceiving, alone, and without qualities.

His amiability and sincerity made me feel greatly attracted towards him, and we became bosom friends. When I took my leave he said, "When next you go to Krishnagar you must stay a night at my house—will you?" I said, "That would be a great pleasure and honour. I will come whenever you ask me."

After this, when I went to Krishnagar he invited me to go and see him. I went to his palace in the evening. He took me to a charming private room and made me sit down. Nobody else was there

except his son Satishchandra. He sang a *dhrupad*[1] for our entertainment. Singing went on till midnight. Sixty different kinds of dishes were served to me at dinner. I slept in the house. The Raja himself came and woke me quite early in the morning, and after having shown me his house of worship, bade me good-bye.

At that time I was thus united by the bonds of religion to these two Rajas. Of these one received me openly ; the other with great secrecy, but within his inmost heart.

[1] Classical song.

CHAPTER XXII

I HAD started with the idea that there were eleven Upanishads in all, and their commentaries had been written by Shankaracharya. I now found that there were several Upanishads which had not been annotated by Shankaracharya. On investigation I found there were 147 Upanishads. Those ancient ones that Shankaracharya had commented upon were the most authentic. In them were contained teachings about the knowledge and worship of Brahma, and the way of salvation. When these Upanishads came to be revered everywhere as the head and front of the Vedas and the choicest of all the *shastras*, then the Vaishnava and Shaiva sects began to disseminate works by the name of Upanishads in which they inculcated the worship of their own respective divinities, in place of the Supreme Soul. Then was composed the Gopal Tâpani Upanishad, in which the Supreme Being's place was occupied by Sri Krishna. In that Gopal Tâpani Upanishad Mathura is designated as Brahmapura and Sri Krishna as Parabrahma. Again there is a Gopichandana Upani-

shad, in which instructions are given as to how the *tilaka*[1] is to be made. In this way the Vaishnavas proclaimed the glory of their own deity. On the other hand, the Shaivas proclaimed the glory of Shiva in another book called the Skandopanishad. There are also the Sundari Tâpani Upanishad, Devi Upanishad, Kaulopanishad, and others, in all of which only S'akti is glorified. Eventually anybody and everybody began to publish anything and everything with the name of Upanishad. In the days of Akbar an Upanishad was again composed with the object of converting Hindus into Musulmans—and it was called Allopanishad.

How strange! Formerly I did not know of the existence of this thorny tangle of Upanishads: only eleven Upanishads were known to me, with the help of which I had started the propagation of Brâhma Dharma, making them its foundation. But now I saw that even this foundation was shaky and built upon sand; even here I did not touch firm ground. First I went back to the Vedas, but could not lay the foundation of the Brâhma Dharma there; then I came to the eleven authentic Upanishads, but how unfortunate! even there I could not lay the foundation. Our relation with God is that of worshipper and worshipped—this is the very essence of Brâhmaism. When we found the opposite conclusion to this arrived at in Shankaracharya's *S'ârirak mimâmsâ*

[1] The caste mark on the forehead.

of the Vedanta Dars'ana, we could no longer place any confidence in it; nor could we accept it as a support of our religion. I had thought that if I renounced the Vedanta Dars'ana and accepted the eleven Upanishads only, I would find a support for Brâhmaism; hence I had relied entirely upon these, leaving aside all else. But when in the Upanishads I came across "I am He" and "Thou art That," then I became disappointed in them also.

These Upanishads could not meet all our needs; could not fill our hearts. Then what was to be done now? What hope was there for us? Where should we seek a refuge for Brâhmaism? It could not be founded on the Vedas, it could not be founded on the Upanishads. Where was its foundation to be laid?

I came to see that the pure heart, filled with the light of intuitive knowledge,—this was its basis. Brahma reigned in the pure heart alone. The pure, unsophisticated heart was the seat of Brâhmaism. We could accept those texts only of the Upanishads which accorded with that heart. Those sayings which disagreed with the heart we could not accept. These were the relations which were now established between ourselves and the Upanishads, the highest of all *shastras*. In the Upanishad itself we read that God is revealed through worship to the heart illumined by an intellect free from all doubt. To the soul of the righteous is revealed the wisdom of

God. The Rishi of old who by means of contemplation and the grace of wisdom had seen the Perfect Brahma in his own pure heart, records his experience in these words: "The pure in spirit, enlightened by wisdom, sees the holy God by means of worship and meditation."

These words accorded with experience of my own heart, hence I accepted them.

Again I read in the Upanishads that those who remain in their own villages and perform sacrifices and other prescribed rites, after death attain the region of smoke. From smoke they pass into night, from night to the dark fortnight, from the dark fortnight to the months of the summer solstice, from those months to the region of the fathers, from that region to the sky, from the sky to the region of the moon; and having enjoyed the fruit of their good actions in that region, they, in order to be born again into this world, fall from the region of the moon into the sky, from the sky they pass on to the air, from air they become smoke, from smoke they turn into vapour, from vapour to cloud, from the clouds they are rained down and spring up here as wheat, barley, food-plants, trees, sesame, and pulse. Of those men and women who eat that wheat, barley, and other food-stuffs they are born here as living creatures. These appeared to me to be unworthy vain imaginings. I could not respond to them. They were not the transcription of the prompting of my heart.

But my heart assented fully to the following noble saying of the Upanishad :

After having studied the Vedas in your preceptor's home, and having duly served your spiritual guide, return to your home ; and after marriage read the Vedas in some holy spot, instruct your pupils and pious sons in the way of wisdom, and after having brought the senses under perfect control, support your life by wealth justly earned without giving pain to any living creature. He who lives thus for the whole term of his life upon this earth enters Brahma-loka after death, and never returns to this world again ; no, never again.

He who purifies his soul in this world by the doing of virtuous deeds in obedience to God's commandments, attains to sacred regions upon leaving this earth ; and casting off his animal nature receives a body divine. In that sacred sphere he obtains a brighter vision of the glory of God, and having reached higher stages of wisdom, love, and virtue he is translated to higher regions. Thus rising higher and higher he progresses from holy to holier spheres, from innumerable heavens to other heavens, and returns not to earth again. In heaven there is no animality, no hunger, no thirst ; there is no desire of women or wealth, neither lust, nor anger, nor greed. There is eternal life, eternal youth. Thus from one heaven to another, the tides of wisdom, love, virtue, and goodness carry that divine soul onward towards everlasting progress, and from his heart the fount of joy perennially springs.

In a story of the Kathopanishad, Nachiketa thus describes heaven to the Lord of Death :

In heaven there is no fear, for thou art not there, O Death ; neither is there old age.

Free from both hunger and thirst, and beyond the reach of sorrow, in the world of heaven all are glad.

But how fares that sinner who commits sinful acts in this world? He who sins here, and repents not of his sinful deeds, and instead of desisting therefrom, falls into sin again and again, enters into doleful regions after death.

Holiness leads unto holy regions, and sin unto regions of sin.

This is Vedic truth. The soul of the sinner goes to sinful regions, according to the degree of his sinfulness ; and when, after having continually burnt there with the agonies of remorse for his tortuous deeds, his expiation is at an end, then he receives grace. Then he attains to his appropriate sacred sphere by dint of such merit as he may have acquired upon earth, and enjoys his reward. According to the degree of wisdom, virtue, and holiness that he may acquire there, he will attain to higher spheres ; and travelling on that divine and holy path, will rise from one to another of countless heavens. By the grace of God the soul is infinitely progressive. Overcoming sin and sorrow this progressive soul must and will progress onwards and upwards ; it will not decline again upon earth. Sin never reigns

triumphant in God's holy kingdom. The soul is first born in the human body. After death it will assume appropriate forms, and pass from sphere to sphere in order to work out the fruits of its merit and demerit, and will not again return here.

Again, when I saw in the Upanishads that the worship of Brahma leads to Nirvâna, my soul was dismayed at the idea :

> Deeds, together with the sentient soul, all become one in Brahma.

If this means that the sentient soul loses its separate consciousness, then this is not the sign of salvation but of terrible extinction. What a vast difference between the eternal progress of the soul according to the Brâhma Dharma on the one hand, and this salvation by annihilation on the other! This Nirvâna-salvation of the Upanishads did not find a place in my heart. This soul instinct with consciousness—whether it dwells in high heaven or upon this lowly earth—when all its worldly desires become extinct, and when the only desire that burns night and day within it is that of attaining the Supreme indwelling Soul ; when it is free from desire and desirous of the Spirit, and when in that state it performs all the good works commanded by Him, serving Him with all humility and patience ; then it is free from its mortal coil, and crossing to this world's farther shore finds refuge in the bosom of the Eternal Brahma, which is beyond the pale of

darkness, radiant with wisdom, and anointed with love! There, filled with new life, and purified by His grace, it remains eternally united in wisdom, love, and joy with that Infinite Wisdom, Love, and Joy, even as shadow unto light. That moment lasts for ever. "This Kingdom of Brahma eternally shines."

This is its final goal, this is its uttermost gain, this is its highest heaven, this is its supreme bliss.

At these sublime words of the Vedas, the mind is satisfied, the soul finds peace, and the heart, filled to the brim with joy, says perpetually: "O how great is the freedom from fear which is attained by the realisation of Brahma!"

O Perfect Wisdom,
When will thy truth, ever new and full of light,
Shine in the sky of my heart?
Through the long night I wait
And watch the eastern horizon,
With face upturned and folded hands,
In hope of new happiness, new life, and a new dawn of day.
What shall I see, what shall I know?
I know not what that joy shall be.
New light within my inmost heart;
By that light, full of great joy I will go singing towards my home—
Who would desire to linger in dreary exile?

Now this blessing of His has descended upon my heart: "May your way to Brahma-loka be safe and clear on the farther side of this world of darkness!" Having received this blessing I can feel the eternal Brahma-loka from this world.

CHAPTER XXIII

The problem that now occupied my thoughts was this: what was to be the common ground for all Brâhmas? Tantras, Puranas, Vedas, Vedanta, Upanishads, none of these afforded a basis of unity for Brâhmas, a foundation for Brâhma Dharma. I decided that the Brâhma Dharma must have a creed that should be the meeting-point of all Brâhmas.

Thinking thus, I laid my heart open to God, and said, "Illumine Thou the darkness of my soul." By His mercy my heart was instantly enlightened. With the help of this light I could see a creed for the Brâhma Dharma, which I immediately took down in pencil on a piece of paper lying before me; which paper I threw at once into a box and locked it. It was then the year 1770 (A.D. 1848), and I was thirty-one years of age. The creed or seed thus remained within the box.

I thought next that the Brâhmas required a sacred book; and thereupon asked Akshay Kumar Datta to take pen and paper and write to my dictation. Then I laid my heart fervently open to God. The

spiritual truths that dawned on my heart through His grace, I went on uttering as fluently and forcibly as the current of a river falling from the mouth of the Upanishads, and Akshay Kumar at once took them down. "*Brâhmavadino vadanti*," I began with fervour, "The *Brâhmavadis*[1] say." What do the *Brâhmavadis* say?

He from whom these elements and all creatures, all living moving things, and animals have sprung, and having sprung, by whom they are kept alive, and towards whom they go, and into whom they ultimately enter; desire ye to know Him above all else, He is Brahma.

Then this truth appeared in my heart, that God is bliss. Upon this I exclaimed:

From Brahma who is joy these beings have sprung, and having sprung they are kept alive by Brahma who is joy; and towards Brahma who is joy they go, and ultimately enter into Him.

I saw that first there was one birthless soul, the Supreme Brahma only, and nothing else. Immediately I said:

This universe was formerly naught. Before the birth of this universe, O beloved disciple, there existed only the one true Supreme Brahma without a second. He is this sublime and uncreated Spirit. He is decayless, deathless, fearless, and eternal.

I saw that, having considered Time, Space, Cause and Effect, Sin and Merit, and the results of action, He created this world:

He meditated upon the creation of the universe, and having so meditated He created all this that is.

[1] The proclaimers of Brahma.

From Him have sprung life, mind, and all the senses, and the sky, air, light, water, and this earth that contains them all.

I saw that all things were ordained according to His laws. I said :

Through fear of Him fire kindles and the sun gives heat ; through fear of Him the clouds, the air, and death go on their way.

Thus, as the truths of the Upanishads began to successively appear in my heart, so did I pronounce them one after the other. Finally I ended with the following :

That all-knowing Being, radiant and immortal, who dwells in this boundless space ; that all-knowing Being, radiant and immortal, who dwells within this soul,—knowing Him, the seeker conquers death. There is no other road to salvation.

Thus by the grace of God, and through the language of the Upanishads, I evolved the foundation of the Brâhma Dharma from my heart. Within three hours the book of Brâhma Dharma was completed.[1] But to understand and grasp its inner meaning, will take me my whole lifetime ; and even then it will not be finished. It is my humble prayer to God, the inspirer of faith, that my reverence for these truths of the Brâhma Dharma may remain unwavering. The work does not represent the sweat of my brow ; but only the outpourings of my heart. Who inspired me with these truths? He

[1] The explanation of the texts was written long after the publication of the 1st and 2nd parts of the Brâhma Dharma.

Who again and again inspires us with intelligence in the paths of religion, worldly prosperity, desire, and salvation ; that living Spirit Himself inspired my heart with these truths. They are not the conclusions of my weak intellect nor the ravings of a deluded or wandering mind. They are God-sent truths that gushed from my heart. These living truths have descended on my heart from Him Who is the Life of Truth, the Light of Truth. Then did I come to know Him. I came to know that he who seeks Him finds Him. It was by dint of my longing alone that I was enabled to gain the dust of His feet, and that dust became the ointment of my eyes.

When the work was completed I divided it into sixteen chapters.[1] The first chapter was called the Chapter of Joy. Thus was composed the Upanishat relating to Brahma, or the Brâhmî Upanishat. Therefore it is written at the end of Part I. of the Brâhma Dharma :

> The Upanishat that has been told unto you, this is that Upanishat which relates to Brahma—the Brâhmî Upanishat.

Let no man think that our Vedas and Upanishads were altogether discarded by me, and that we did not keep in touch with them at all. The Brâhma Dharma was built of the essential truths contained

[1] A long time after the Brâhma Dharma was published, when I was staying in Mussoorie, I inserted the following text of the Upanishads into its 16th chapter : "The wise ever perceive the supreme presence of God as the eye perceives the sun."

in the Vedas and Upanishads, and my heart was witness thereunto. The Brâhma Dharma was the fruit on the topmost branch of the Vedic Tree of Life. The Upanishat is the crowning-point of the Vedas ; and the crowning-point of the Upanishads is the Brâhmî Upanishat—the Upanishat relating to Brahma. This has been incorporated in Part I. of the Brâhma Dharma.

It was in the Upanishads that I first found an echo answering to the spiritual emotions of my soul ; hence I endeavoured to establish the Brâhma Dharma on the whole of the Vedas and the whole of the Upanishads, but found to my sorrow that I could not do so. But this sorrow is vain, since the whole of a mine does not contain unalloyed gold. The worthless ore has to be broken in order to extract gold therefrom. Not that all the gold contained in the mine has been extracted. Many truths still remain deeply embedded in the mine of the Vedas and Upanishads. Whenever devout, pure, and earnest souls desire to seek for them, their heart-gates will be opened by the grace of God, and they will be able to unearth those truths from that mine.

It is a self-evident truth that only those whose hearts have been purified by good deeds can aspire to the worship of Brahma. What is that virtue, and what are its precepts ? This it is positively necessary for Brâhmas to know ; and to mould their characters

according to those precepts is their daily duty. Therefore the Brâhmas must have religious commandments and injunctions. As you must read the Upanishat relating to Brahma in order to know Brahma, so you must purify your heart by conforming to the laws imposed by religion. These are the two branches of the Brâhma Dharma: firstly the Upanishat, secondly the moral code. The Upanishat forming the first part of the Brâhma Dharma was completed. Now began the search for commandments.

I proceeded to read the Mahabharata, the Gîta, the Manu-smriti, etc., and by collecting verses therefrom to swell the record of commandments. In this work I got great help from the Manu-smriti. It also contains verses from other smritis, from the Tantras, the Mahabharata, and the Gîta. I had to work very hard to record these commandments. First I divided them into seventeen chapters; then omitting one I made this part also consist of sixteen chapters.

The first verse of the first chapter contains this injunction; that the householder must keep in touch with Brahma in all his actions:

> The *grihastha* or householder must be devoted to Brahma and a constant seeker after truth; he must dedicate all his actions to the Supreme Brahma.

The second verse relates to the duties of children towards their parents:

The son of the house should look upon his father and mother as visible deities, and always serve them with devotion.

The last verse contains injunctions as to the way in which members of the family should treat one another in the home :

The elder brother is as a father, wife and son are as one's own body ; the servants are as one's own shadow, and the daughter is an object of great tenderness. Hence, even when sorely tried by these, do not give way to impatience, but ever be forbearing.

Bear with the improper language of others. Do not insult any one. Whilst you dwell in this mortal body be no man's foe.

The second and third chapters treat of the duties and behaviour of husband and wife towards each other. The fourth chapter deals with religious precepts, Chap. v. with contentment, Chap. vi. with being truthful in word and deed, Chap. vii. with bearing witness, Chap. viii. with goodness, Chap. ix. with giving in charity, Chap. x. with self-control, Chap. xi. with moral maxims, Chap. xii. with avoiding slander, Chap. xiii. with controlling the senses, Chap. xiv. with giving up sin, Chap. xv. with the control of speech and of the mind and body, and Chap. xvi. with religious faith. The last two verses are :

Friends turn away their faces and depart, leaving the dead body like a log of wood on the ground ; Dharma follows in its wake. Therefore habitually and gradually lay by a store of virtue for your need. With the help of Dharma, man is enabled to cross the impenetrable darkness of this world.

These are the commandments, these the precepts, this the

Scripture. Thus shalt thou worship Him; thus shalt thou worship Him.

He who reads or listens to this holy Brâhma Dharma in a calm and chaste spirit, and acts according to its religious principles with a heart devoted to Brahma, shall obtain fruit everlasting.

CHAPTER XXIV

Thus, in the year 1770 (A.D. 1848), the Brâhma Dharma was compiled in book form. The doctrines of *Adwaitavâda*, *Avatârvâdâ*, and *Mâyâvâda*[1] had no place therein. It was written in the Book of Brâhma Dharma that the relation of friendship subsisted between God and soul, and that they were constantly together: hence tne doctrine of Monism was denied. The Brâhma Dharma says:

> He Himself did not become anything.

He became not the material universe, neither trees nor creepers, neither birds, nor beasts, nor man. Hence the doctrine of Incarnation was denied. The Brâhma Dharma says:

> He considered within Himself, and considering within Himself He created all that is.

This universe is the outcome of perfect truth. This universe is relative truth; its Creator is the Truth of Truth, the Absolute Truth. This universe is not dream-stuff, neither is it a mental illusion, but

[1] The doctrines of Monism, Incarnation, and Illusion.

it exists in reality. The truth which has given it birth is the absolute truth, and this is relative truth. Thus the doctrine of Maya was denied.

Hitherto the Brâhmas had no sacred book ; their doctrines, principles, and aims were scattered here and there in various books. Now they were brought together in a concise form. This touched the hearts of many Brâhmas, and flooded them with the waters of holiness. This book of Brâhma Dharma is bound to touch the hearts of all who possess one. During the Brâhma-Samaj prayers the first chapter was read in place of the Vedas that used to be read out formerly; and the book of Brâhma Dharma was read instead of the Upanishads. Henceforth the Brâhmas began to recite the following text of the Brâhma Dharma during prayers, either in the original Sanskrit or in the translation :

Lead me, O Lord, from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality.

O Thou who art self-radiant, reveal Thyself to me !

O Thou dread God, may Thy benign countenance protect me for ever more.

The building of the third floor of the Samaj house had been commenced the previous year, and we were urging on its completion before the 11th Magha of this year. This being the nineteenth anniversary of the Brâhma-Samaj, the week passed in preparations for chanting—seated in the new third story hall—the new *swâdhyâya*[1] in Vedic tones, for the offering of new

[1] Arrangement of Vedic hymns.

hymns of praise to the Lord of our worship, and for the singing of new songs. The room was finished by the 11th Magha, and the Samaj wore a new aspect. The white marble reading-dais, the well-decorated singing platform in front, the wooden gallery rising east and west,—all was new and beautiful and white. The whole was lighted by crystal chandeliers. We arrived with our family party at the Samaj in the evening. Every face bespoke new zeal and new love; every one was filled with delight. Vishnu from his place in the choir gave out the song, "O Thou Supreme Joy." Then the Brâhma service commenced, all of us reciting the *swâdhyâya* in unison. Verses were recited from the book of Brâhma Dharma. The service was brought to a close with the words, "Peace, peace, peace in the Lord!"

As all became silent I stood up in front of the dais, and read the following prayer with a heart full of joy and devotion:

O Lord! If most men fail to realise Thee through this beautiful universe that Thou hast spread around us, that is not because Thou art far from any of us. Thou art more vividly near to us than anything that we touch with the hand, but our senses, busied about external things, have kept us under the spell of illusion and turned us away from Thee. Thy light shines forth through darkness, but the darkness comprehends Thee not. As Thou art in the darkness, so art Thou also in light. Thou art in the air, Thou art in the sky, Thou art in the clouds, Thou art in the flowers, Thou art in the scent, O Lord! Thou revealest Thyself everywhere, Thou shinest through all Thy works: but erring and thoughtless man heeds Thee not. The

whole universe proclaims Thee alone, and repeatedly cries aloud Thy holy Name, but we are so dull by nature that we remain deaf even to the mighty tones which proceed from the universe. Thou art all around us, Thou art within our hearts, but we wander far from our hearts, we do not perceive our soul, and do not feel Thy presence therein. O Thou Supreme Spirit! O eternal spring of light and beauty! O ancient One, without beginning and end, life of all living creatures! they who seek Thee within themselves, their endeavours to see Thee are never fruitless. But alas! how small the number of those that seek Thee! The things Thou hast given to us have so engrossed our minds, that they do not suffer us to recall the hand of the giver. Our minds have not a moment's freedom in which to turn from worldly pleasures and think of Thee. We depend on Thee for life, yet live in forgetfulness of Thee. O Lord! unless we know Thee, what is life? What is this world? The meaningless things of this world—the passing flower, the ebbing current, the fragile palace, the fading picture, the glittering metals appear real to us and attract our minds. We think them to be pleasing things; but we do not consider that the pleasure they afford us is given to us by Thee through them. The beauties Thou hast showered upon Thy creation have concealed Thee from our sight. So high and pure art Thou, that our senses cannot reach Thee. Thou art "Brahma, Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite." Thou art transcending sound, transcending touch, formless; imperceptible to taste or to smell. Hence they that have debased themselves utterly by brutal deeds cannot see Thee,—alas! some even doubt Thy existence. Unfortunate that we are, we take that which is true to be a shadow and that which is a shadow to be reality. That which is worthless is all in all to us, and that which is our all is nothing! These vain and worthless things are suited to these base and inferior minds. O Supreme Spirit, what is it that I see? I see Thee revealed in all things! He who has seen Thee not, has seen naught. He who enjoys Thee not, has not tasted of any enjoyment; his life is like a dream, his existence is

vain. Ah! how unhappy is that soul, which, not knowing Thee, is friendless, hopeless, and without a resting-place. How happy is that soul which seeks after Thee, which yearns to find Thee. But he alone is supremely happy, to whom Thou hast revealed the full glory of Thy face, whose tears have been dried by Thy hand, who by Thy loving mercy has attained the fulfilment of all desire in attaining Thee. Ah me! how long, how much longer must I wait for that day on which I shall be filled with the fulness of joy in Thy presence and bring my will in harmony with Thine. Flooded with joy by this hope, my soul says, O Lord, there is none equal to Thee. My body feels faint, the world fades away at this moment when I see Thee, who art the Lord of my life, and my support everlasting.

This prayer was composed by the great Fénelon, the French *brâhmavadi*: and Rajnarayan Babu made a fine translation of it, which I interspersed with suitable texts from the Upanishads. After this prayer was read I saw that many Brâhmas were affected to tears. Such emotion had never before been witnessed in the Brâhma-Samaj. Hitherto the severe and sacred flame of knowledge alone had been lighted in Brahma's shrine; now He was worshipped with the flowers of heart-felt love.

CHAPTER XXV

The Tatwabodhini Sabha had now been established ten years, yet pujas were still performed in our house; the Durga Puja and Jagaddhatri Puja. I did not think it right to hurt everybody's feelings and go against everybody's opinion by abolishing long-established pujas and festivities from our ancestral home. The best plan was for me to keep aloof and take no part in them myself. If any members of my family had faith in them, or regarded them with devotional feelings, it would be wrong to wound those susceptibilities. In consultation with my brothers, and with their permission, I gradually tried to stop the puja celebrations.

My youngest brother Nagendranath had lately returned from Europe, and seeing his liberal mind and broad ideas I had hoped that he would support my views and oppose idolatry. But in this I was doomed to disappointment. He said that the Durga Puja was a bond of our society, a sure and fruitful means of promoting friendly intercourse and establishing good relations with all. It would hurt

everybody's feelings if this was interfered with, and it would not be right to do so. However, by dint of my reasonings and entreaties my brothers were prevailed upon to give up the Jagaddhatri Puja. From that time the Jagaddhatri Puja was banished from our house for ever. The Durga Puja went on as before.

I still had to keep up the old practice, which I had begun with the adoption of Brâhmaism, of leaving home during the Durga Pujas. This time, in the year 1771 (A.D. 1849), in order to avoid the pujas, I set out towards Assam. I went by steamer to Dacca, and thence crossing the Meghna reached Gauhati by the Brahmaputra.

When the steamer arrived at Gauhati, the Commissioner and several other big people came to see it, and met me also. They were all pleased to make my acquaintance. Hearing that I wanted to see the Kâmâkhya temple, they all promised to send their own elephants. In my eagerness to go and see this temple of Kâmâkhya I was up and ready by four o'clock in the morning, but saw no elephants on the bank except that of the Commissioner, which was waiting for me there. He was the only man who had kept his word. At this I was delighted, and having landed began to walk, telling the driver to follow with the elephant. After having gone a short distance I saw that the elephant was lagging behind. The driver was trying to get it across a small canal.

Seeing this I waited for the elephant a short time, but it began to get late, and the driver was unable to make the elephant cross the canal. I lost patience, and could wait no longer.

I walked six miles till I arrived at the foot of the Kâmâkhya hill, and without stopping to take rest began to climb it. The hill pathway was paved with stone. On either side of the road was a thick jungle, which the eye could not penetrate. The path led straight up. Alone I continued to ascend that solitary forest track ; it was then shortly before sunrise. There was a slight drizzle, but I climbed on unheeding. I had got up about three-quarters of the way when my legs began to give way and refused to do my bidding. Tired and worn out, I sat down upon a high stone. I remained sitting alone in that jungle, soaked within by the sweat of exertion, and without by the rain—afraid lest tigers, bears, or what not, should come out from the jungle.

At this juncture the driver put in his appearance. He said, "I was unable to bring the elephant, and seeing your honour walking on alone I followed as fast as I could." I had then partly recovered my strength and regained the control of my limbs ; so I began to climb the hill again with him. On the top of the hill was a broad plateau, studded with a number of huts ; but not a soul was to be seen anywhere. I entered the Kâmâkhya temple ; it is not a temple but a cave in the rocks, in which there was

no image, only a *yonimudra*.[1] After seeing this, and exhausted with walking, I came back and refreshed myself by bathing in the Brahmaputra. Its cool waters instilled fresh vigour into my body. I then saw that a crowd of about four or five hundred people were making a row on the banks of the stream. On being asked what they wanted they said, "We are the pândâs[2] of Kâmâkhya Devi. You have seen Kâmâkhya, but have given us nothing. We have to perform the goddess' worship till late in the night, so we can't get up till late in the morning." "Go away," I said to them, "you will get nothing from me."

[1] Phallic symbol.

[2] Temple guides and priests.

CHAPTER XXVI

AGAIN next year, as the beauty of autumn unfolded itself, the desire to travel was kindled within my breast. I could not make up my mind where to go this time. Intending to take a river-trip, I went to see a boat on the Ganges. There I saw a big steamer, on which the sailors were busily engaged in work. It seemed that the vessel would soon be starting. I asked when it would get to Allahabad. The men said that the ship would go out to sea in two or three days. On hearing that this was a sea-bound steamer, I thought it a very good opportunity of satisfying my desire for going on the sea. I at once went to the captain and engaged a cabin ; and in due time set out for a sea voyage on board ship. I had never seen the blue waters of the sea before. The sight of the varied and distinctive beauty of day and night on the bright blue, undulating, and infinite ocean plunged me into the depths of the glory of the Eternal Spirit.

After reaching the sea one night was spent on the rocking waves, and then the steamer cast anchor

at 3 o'clock on the following afternoon. I saw a stretch of white sand before me, with what appeared to be a settlement upon it, and went out in a boat to see the place. As I was walking about I saw some Chittagong Bengalis with amulets on their necks coming towards me. "How come you here and what is it you do here?" I asked them. They said, "We are traders. This Ashwin we have brought an image of the Mother here." I was astonished to hear of the Durga Puja festival in this Burmese town Khaek-phu. What! the Durga Puja here too!

After this I returned to the steamer and sailed for Moulmein. When, leaving the sea, the ship entered the Moulmein river, I thought it was like coming into the river Ganges from Gangâsâgar.[1] But this river was not at all beautiful. The water was slimy and full of crocodiles. Nobody bathed in it. Arrived at Moulmein the ship cast anchor. Here a Mudaliar of Madras received me. He came up to me and introduced himself. He was a high Government official and a real gentleman. He took me to his house. During my short stay in Moulmein I remained his guest, and had a very pleasant time. The roads of Moulmein are clean and broad. In the shops on both sides only women were selling various commodities. I bought some boxes and fine silk stuffs from them. As I was going through the bazaar looking about me I came to a fish market,

[1] The mouth of the main current of the Ganges.

where I saw big fish laid out for sale on big tables. I asked what these huge fish were. "Crocodiles," they said. The Burmese eat crocodiles. The Buddhist doctrine of *Ahimsâ* (non-killing) is on their lips; but crocodiles are inside their stomachs!

I was walking one evening along the broad streets of Moulmein, when I saw a man coming towards me. As he approached I saw he was a Bengali. At that time I was surprised to see a Bengali there. Whence came a Bengali here across the seas? Bengalis are ubiquitous! "Whence come you here?" said I. He replied, "Misfortune has brought me here." I at once understood what the misfortune was, and asked, "How long did the misfortune last?" He said, "Seven years." "What had you done?" I asked. "Nothing much," he replied, "I only forged a Government promissory note. I have served my time now, but cannot go home for want of money." I offered to pay his passage. But where was the home he could go to? He had set up business there, had married, and was living happily. Why should he go home to show his blackened face?

The Mudaliar told me there was a cave here worth seeing, and if I wished he could take me to see it. I agreed. On the night of the new moon at high tide he brought a long boat with a wooden cabin in the middle. That night Mudaliar and I, with the captain of the steamer and seven or eight others, got into the boat and started at midnight.

The whole night we sat up in the boat. The Englishmen began singing their English songs, and asked me to sing Bengali songs also. I sang a few hymns now and then, which they did not understand or like at all—they only laughed. After travelling twenty-four miles that night we reached our destination at 4 o'clock in the morning. Our boat put to shore.

It was then still dark. Not far from shore we saw lights glimmering from a house surrounded by trees and shrubs. Impelled by curiosity I went out in the darkness alone in that unknown place to see what it was. I saw a small hut, inside which some ascetics with shaven heads in yellow garb were carrying candles about and placing them hither and thither. I was surprised to see men like the *dandi*[1] sect of Benares here also. How could *dandis* come here? Afterwards I learnt that they were *phungis*, priests and preceptors of the Buddhists. I was watching their play of light unobserved, when one of them caught sight of me and took me inside the room. They gave me a sitting-carpet and water to wash my feet, thus showing their hospitality to me who had come to their house. Hospitality is one of the highest duties of the Buddhists.

Day broke and I returned to the boat. The sun rose. Then the other guests of Mudaliar came and joined us there, making up a party of fifty in

[1] A sect of ascetics.

all. Mudaliar treated us all to breakfast. He had procured several elephants, on each of which three or four of us sat and went through the great jungle. The place was studded with small hills and thick jungles, and the elephant was the only means of locomotion here. At three in the afternoon we arrived at the mouth of the cave. Here we got down from our elephants and walked on through a jungle waist-deep. The mouth of the cave was small, and we had to enter it on all-fours. After crawling a few steps we were able to stand upright. It was very slippery inside, and our feet began to slip. Treading cautiously we proceeded some distance. It was pitch dark at three in the afternoon; it seemed like three in the morning. What we were afraid of was, that if we lost our way in the passage, how were we to get out? We should have to roam about this cave the whole day. This thought made me keep an eye on the light from the narrow opening wherever I went. Inside that dark cave the fifty of us dispersed and stood apart. Each had powdered sulphur in his hand. Each one of us placed the sulphur-powder in a niche in the rocks wherever he stood. After we had placed ourselves in position, the captain lit his powder. Thereupon each of us applied a match to his own powder all at once. Fifty different parts of the cave were lighted up by fifty torchlights, and we could see the whole of the interior. What

a huge cave! We looked upwards, but its height was beyond the range of our sight. We marvelled to see the natural and varied moulding inside the cave, wrought by the action of rain water.

After this we came outside, had a picnic on the mountain, and returned to Moulmein. On our way back we heard the sound of music produced by several instruments. We went in the direction of the sound, and saw some Burmese dancing there with various contortions. Joining in their merriment, the captain and other Englishmen also began to dance in like manner with great gusto. A Burmese woman, who was standing at her door, seeing that the *sahibs* were making fun of them, whispered something in the ears of the wildly excited men, and they at once stopped their dancing and music and fled. The Englishmen tried hard to persuade them to dance again, but they would not listen, and made themselves scarce. Such is the influence of women over men in Burma.

We returned to Moulmein. I went to see a highly respected Burmese official at his house, and he received me with courtesy. He sat on a chair placed on the floor-cloth. I sat on another. The room was a big one. At the four corners his four young daughters were sitting sewing something. When I was seated, he said "*ada*," upon which one of the girls came and placed a round *pan*[1] box

[1] Betel leaf.

in my hand. On opening it I saw there were *pan*-spices inside. This is the way Buddhist house-holders honour their guests. He presented me with some cuttings from a fine flowering tree of his country, akin to the Asoka tree. I brought them home and planted them in the garden, but could not keep them alive in this country, even with the greatest care. The fruit of this tree is a favourite delicacy with the Burmese. If they have sixteen rupees[1] with them they will pay that sum for this fruit. To them it is a great delicacy, but to us even its smell is intolerable.

[1] Equivalent to a sovereign.

CHAPTER XXVII

On returning from Burma I went to Cuttack that year at the end of Falgun. Taking the route by which pilgrims go to Jagannath, I reached Cuttack by palanquin stages. There I put up in a hut. In the month of Chaitra the sun in Cuttack was very fierce, and I felt overpowered by the heat. From there I went to my zemindari *kutcherry*[1] situated in a place called Pandua, and remained there some time to look after the zemindari. Thence I went to Puri to see Jagannath, travelling at night by palanquin stages. At the break of day I arrived at the edge of a beautiful tank not far from Puri, and heard its name was Chandan-jatra Tank. There I got down from the palanquin and removed all the fatigue of travel by bathing in the refreshing waters of the tank.

No sooner had I come out from my bath than a pândâ of Jagannath came and got hold of me. I at once accompanied him on foot. I had no shoes on, which pleased the pândâ very much. On reach-

[1] The office of the estate.

ing the temple I saw the gate locked, and a crowd of people standing outside, all eager to see Jagannath. The pândâ had the keys of the temple with him, and he proceeded to unlock the gates. When one gate had been opened, I saw a long corridor inside the temple, into which the pândâ entered and opened another door, and I saw another corridor. There were a thousand pilgrims behind me, who rushed into the temple crying "*Jai Jagannath!*" when the pândâ opened the last door. I was taken unawares and carried away by the surging crowd. My companions managed to hold and keep me safe somehow, but my spectacles fell off and got broken. I could not contrive to see the image of Jagannath; but saw, indeed, the formless Jagannath. There is a saying here to the effect that one sees whatever one wishes to see in this temple of Jagannath. In my case that proved to be true.

In that narrow, dark, and stuffy temple there was an unimaginable crowd of pilgrims, men and women. It was hardly possible for the women to preserve their decorum. Caught in that billowing mass I was swayed hither and thither, and it seemed impossible to remain standing in any one place even for a single moment. Then the *jamadar*[1] and pândâs who were with me joined hands to form a sort of railing, and surrounded me on three sides. In front Jagannath's jewelled throne itself constituted

[1] Gatekeeper.

my protection. I could then look round freely. In front of Jagannath there was a big copper vessel full of water, in which his reflection could be seen. The teeth of this reflected image were brushed, and water poured on it again ; this completed Jagannath's bath and toilet. The pândâs then climbed on to the image of Jagannath, and adorned it with new clothes and new ornaments. It was then past 11 o'clock. After this it was time for the holy repast, and I came away.

From there I went to the temple of Vimalâ Devi. Here there were very few people. Everybody noticed that I did not salute Vimalâ Devi. The Uriyas were highly incensed : "Who is this person that does not bow down, who is he?"—and they all came towards me threateningly. Realising the situation, my pândâ brought me back to my appointed lodgings, where he said to me, "It was unwise of you not to salute Vimalâ Devi. It has given great offence to the pilgrims. It was nothing but a bow ; you might have done it."

"Talk of not saluting your Vimalâ Devi," said I to him ; "why, I did not even bow down to Maya Devi. Do you know, I once went to Maya Puri. Going to the temple of Maya, I saw her ; she is of slender make and fair, with fine teeth, half-reclining on a jewelled couch, resplendent in her beauty. She did not deign to take any notice of me whatever. One of her companions signed to me to bow

down. 'I do not salute any created god or goddess,' said I, at which they bit their tongues deprecatingly. Maya Devi said to them, 'If he doesn't make a reverence, let him offer a flower.' I did not make any reply to this, and came out of her room. On coming downstairs I went into the front verandah in order to go out. But as I made a step forward I saw another verandah before me; beyond that, yet another verandah. Thus as many verandahs as I passed through, so many more came in front. I went across several, one after the other, but could not make an end of them. Then I understood that I was caught in the meshes of Maya. At last, utterly tired and worn out, I fell down on the floor. My dreamland vanished. Coming to my senses I found that this Puri of Jagannath was that Puri of Maya Devi."

The pândâ could make nothing of what I said, and went away. Then came the stir and bustle of the *mahaprasad*,[1] over which there was much rejoicing. The *jamadars*, Brâhmans, and servants all took the *mahaprasad*, and began to put it into each other's mouth. Then there remained no distinction of Brâhman and Sudra. All ate together and rejoiced. Glory be to the Uriyas, in this matter they have won the palm; they have unified all castes.

From Puri I returned to Cuttack. On arriving there I learnt that our zemindari *dewan*[2] Ramchandra

[1] The consecrated food. [2] Chief manager.

Ganguli was dead. He was a near connection of Rammohan Roy, and a friend of his son Radhaprasad Roy. He was the first secretary of the Brâhma-Samaj. Recognising his capacity for business, my father had appointed him *dewan* of our whole estate, and up to now he had been managing the zemindari affairs under our direction with great ability. Hearing of his death, I hastened home from Cuttack in the month of Jaishtha 1773 (A.D. 1851), and began to make new arrangements for our zemindaris.

CHAPTER XXVIII

In A.D. 1854 Girindranath died. He had conducted the affairs of the firm with great ability, so that his death created a vacancy not easy to be filled with regard to their management. By this time many debts had been cleared, though many still remained. Certain creditors, unable to brook further delay in payment, had filed suits against us, and obtained decrees also.

At this time, after breakfast I used to spend the day in the Tatwabodhini Sabha's office on the second floor of the Brâhma-Samaj, looking after the Sabha's affairs. One day as I was going to the Sabha after breakfast my people said, "Don't go to the Sabha to-day, there is fear of a warrant." Thinking this to be an idle caution, I went to the Sabha in spite of it, and sat there occupied in business. After some time a Bengali clerk came up to me, red in the face, and said in a low tone, "Didn't I send word to you not to come here to-day; why did you come?" After which, pointing me out to the bailiff behind him, he said, "This is Devendranath Tagore." The

bailiff then showed me a warrant, and said, "You must pay down Rs. 14,000 at once." I said, "I have not Rs. 14,000 with me now." He said, "Then you must come with me to the sheriff." Telling him to wait a little, I sent for a carriage. When it came the bailiff, an Englishman, took me in it to the sheriff.

Meanwhile, great confusion arose in our house about my having been arrested under a warrant. Everybody kept saying they had all told me not to leave the house that day, but I had not listened to them, and had got myself arrested. It so happened that that year our solicitor, Mr. George, was the sheriff. He made me sit down in his office, and asked me why I had left the house that day. On the other hand, my youngest brother Nagendranath went to Judge Colvin, who advised him to get me released on bail; upon which Chandra Babu and others of our household stood bail for me, and delivered me from the fate of imprisonment.

On being informed of this incident my uncle Prasanna Kumar Tagore was much annoyed, and said, "Devendra never asks me anything, never tells me anything; if he would only take my advice I could arrange all his debts for him." Hearing of this I presented myself before him the next day. He said to me, "Look here, you needn't do anything else, only place all your zemindari income in my hands, and I shall pay off your debts as they fall

due, so that nobody will be able to worry you about them." I agreed gratefully to this proposal of his, and thereafter used to make over to him the whole income of our zemindari, while he undertook to clear off our debts.

After this I used to go nearly every morning to Prasanna Kumar Tagore, show him the accounts, and talk over money matters. Whenever I went, I used to see his favourite boon companion, Naba Banerjee, by his side, with a white *morassa* turban on. As the sheriff is to the judge's court, so was Naba Banerjee to his *darbar*. In all matters he would take counsel with him. Naba Banerjee was the only man he trusted. One day, in the presence of Prasanna Kumar Tagore, this Naba Banerjee said to me, "The *Tatwabodhini Patrika* is an excellent paper. I sit in Babu's[1] library and read it; it imparts knowledge and arouses one's faculties; from it one gains wisdom." "Do you read the *Tatwabodhini*?" said I. "Don't read it, don't read it." "Why?" asked Prasanna Kumar Tagore. "What happens if you read the *Tatwabodhini*?" I said, "Reading the *Tatwabodhini* brings one to such a plight as mine." He said, "I say, Devendra has come out with a confession, he has made a real confession!" and broke out into loud laughter. "Well," said he to me, "can you prove to me that God exists?" "Can you prove to me that wall is there?" I replied. He

[1] Respectful way of alluding to his patron.

laughed and said, "Upon my word, what a question! I can see that the wall is there; what is there to prove?" I said, "I see that God is everywhere; what is there to prove?" "As if God is the same as the wall!" he answered. "Ha, ha! what is Devendra saying?" I said, "God is something even nearer to me than this wall—He is within me, within my soul. The sacred books speak ill of those who do not believe in God. 'The *asuras* cling to falsehood, they say there is no God in this world.'" He said, "But I revere this saying of the Scriptures above all others, 'I am the Supreme Deity, eternal, free and self-existent; I am none other.'"

If he had put forward some other proud claim such as, "I am wealthy, I am lord over many: who is there equal to me?"—then there would have been some sense in his claim. But that I myself am the Supreme Deity—such vaunting is the source of much evil; one feels ashamed at the very idea. Bound as we are by a thousand worldly coils—steeped as we are in decay and sorrow, sin and evil—what is more strange than that we should consider ourselves eternal, free, and self-existent? Shankarâchârya has turned India's head by preaching the doctrine of Monism; the identity of God and man. Following his teachings, both ascetics and men of the world are repeating this senseless formula, "I am that Supreme Deity."

CHAPTER XXIX

On the 29th Pausha 1778 (A.D. 1856), a general meeting of the Brâhma-Samaj was held, at which Ramanath Tagore presided. At this time there were vacancies for two trustees in the Brâhma-Samaj, and the object of this meeting was to appoint these trustees. According to the rules of the trust-deed, only Prasanna Kumar Tagore had the power of appointing trustees. At his wish, and by common consent, the president appointed Ramaprasad Roy and myself the two trustees for the Brâhma-Samaj that day.

The creed of the Brâhma faith I had locked up in a box in 1770 (A.D. 1848). Taking it out thence a year afterwards, I was astonished to find that it was a worthy creed. I substituted the words "infinite" and "almighty" for "blest" and "of wondrous power" in the second article, and the word "welfare" for "happiness" in the third article. At the end of the second article I added the words, "*Dhruvam purnamapratimam.*" In the *Tatwabodhini Patrika* for the month of Agrahayan 1773 (A.D.

1851), the fourth article of the creed was published as the headline, "To love Him and to do His bidding is to worship Him." From the month of Vyshakha 1779 (A.D. 1857), the complete creed began to be published as the heading of the *Tatwa-bodhini Patrika* :

> In the beginning, there was only one Supreme Spirit ; there was naught else. He created all this that is. He is infinite in wisdom and goodness : He is everlasting, all-knowing, all-pervading, all-sustaining, formless, changeless ; One only without a second, almighty, self-dependent and perfect ; there is none like unto Him. Our welfare here and hereafter consists only in worshipping Him. To love Him and to do His bidding is to worship Him.

After the publication of this creed I found that all Brâhmas assented to it thoroughly, and all were satisfied with it. Up to this time nobody has objected to it. Although the Brâhma-Samaj has been variously split up, yet by the grace of God this creed still remains the one common ground of all Brâhmas. So much so that, on the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Brâhma-Samaj, a devout and thoughtful Brâhma, in the course of his sermon, said in praise of this creed, "As long as truth is esteemed in this world, as long as King Conscience sits enthroned in the hearts of men, so long there is no doubt that it will adorn the nature of man."

CHAPTER XXX

At last, in the course of these ten years, our debts had mostly been paid off. The heavy load of my paternal debts had been a good deal lightened. But another new kind of burden of misfortune and debts began to weigh me down. When Girindranath was alive he had incurred heavy debts for his own expenses. I had cleared some of these along with my paternal liabilities. Now again Nagendranath began to involve himself deeply in debt on account of his personal expenses; and not only for that reason, but to help another he would borrow even Rs. 10,000—so kindly and sympathetic a disposition had he.

His liberality and his amiable manners attracted people greatly. One day one of his creditors had spoken sharp words to him about his debts, so he came to me with tears in his eyes, and said, "My creditor insists on having your signature along with mine on the note of hand which I have given him." I said to him, "I can give you all I have, but I cannot sign any note or bond. As it is, I cannot clear

off the debts we have already ; how then can I bind myself down for these fresh debts of yours ? I will not again knowingly plunge into the sinful mire of debt." On hearing me speak thus he leant against a wall, and wept for three hours. His weeping made my heart break ; but I could not sign his note. I said to him, " You may take all the money that we shall get by leasing our silk factory of Galimpur, and by selling all our books—I freely give that to you, but I cannot sign a note of hand against my conscience, without knowing how to repay the money." He was greatly grieved and offended. Saying that his elder brother would not help him, he left our house in a huff, and went to stay in the house of my youngest uncle, Ramanath Tagore. After this I had to sign a note of Rs. 8000 for him, and he promised that he would pay off the money by the sale of all the books we possessed, and that I should not be put to any trouble about it in future.

But even then Nagendranath did not come home, and continued to live in our uncle's house. All these events crushed my spirit entirely. I thought that if I stayed at home I would have to suffer various perturbations like these, and also gradually get involved again in a network of debt ; so I too had better leave home and never come back. Then again, Akshay Kumar Datta started a Friends' Society, in which the nature of God was decided

upon by show of hands. For instance, somebody said, "Is God the personification of bliss or not?" Those who believed in His blissfulness held up their hands. Thus the truth or otherwise of God's attributes was decided by a majority of votes! Amongst many of those who surrounded me, who were as my very limbs, I could no longer see any signs of religious feeling or piety; each only pitted his own intellect and power against the others. Nowhere did I obtain a sympathetic response. My antipathy and indifference to the world grew apace. This profited me greatly in one respect, inasmuch as I became eager to descend into the deeper recesses of my soul in search of the Supreme Soul. I began to enquire into first principles. I resolved to realise in my life by discovering their inner meaning, and to test by the light of reason, those truths that had come floating to me on the waves of spiritual emotion, by the grace of God.

It is not yet revealed to me whence I come, why I came here. This is my regret and my grief, that I remain ignorant of my own duties.

Where I was, why I came here, where I shall go again; all this has not yet been revealed to me. I have not yet attained as much knowledge of God as is possible here. No longer will I join the frivolous throng, or waste my time in idle talk. I shall concentrate my mind, and practise severe austerities in retirement for His sake. I shall leave my home,

never to return. Shrimat Shankarâchârya teaches me thus :

Whose art thou, and whence art thou come? Meditate on this truth, O brother.

At this time, in the month of Shravana 1778 (A.D. 1856), I was staying at Gopallal Tagore's garden-house in Baranagore. Here I used to read the Shrimatbhagavat.[1] As I was reading it, I was struck with this verse :

O Suvrata, the malady that is engendered in human beings by certain things, can never be cured in them by those selfsame things.

I had fallen into this great trouble by staying in the world ; therefore the world cannot save me from this trouble. Let me, then, fly hence. In the evening I used to sit with my friends in the garden on the banks of the Ganges. The thick clouds of the rainy season used to flit over my head through the sky. These dark-blue clouds brought great joy and peace to my mind at the time. I thought to myself, how free to roam are these ; how easily they go hither and thither at their own sweet will. How glad I should be if I could roam as freely as they, and wander about whithersoever I listed. In the Chhandogya Upanishad I found it said :

Those who wander here now, knowing the soul and all her true desires ; they become free to roam hereafter in all the worlds, and can pass freely from one world to another.

[1] One of the Hindu Scriptures.

This appeared to me eminently enviable. I thought to myself, I shall go hence and wander everywhere. Again, I saw in the commentary of the Svetas'watara Upanishad :

Not through riches, not through the begetting of children, not through works, but through renunciation alone is that immortality to be attained.

Then the world could hold back my mind no longer, and I broke loose from its delusive coils. I began looking forward to the advent of the month of Ashwin,[1] when I would fly hence, wander about in all places, and never return.

The call has come from the Seventh Heaven ! Who knows what work of Thine has been impeded by reason of my foolish pursuits in this world ?

[1] September–October.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE month of Ashwin, for which I had been waiting, had now arrived. I hired a boat for Rs. 100 to go to Benares. At 11 A.M. on the 19th Ashwin 1778 (A.D. 1856), the tide of the Ganges set in, and a new wave of enthusiasm surged in my breast also. I got into the boat. The anchor was weighed, the boat started, and looking up to God I said :

We are seated in the boat; arise, O favourable wind! Perhaps we shall see once more that Friend of ours Who is so well worth the seeing.

Going against the current of the Ganges in Ashwin, it took us six days to reach Navadwipa. We spent the night moored to a sandbank in the Ganges. All around were its waters, and in the middle floated this islet. On account of the high wind and rain, we were unable to leave its shores for two days. On the 16th of Kartik[1] we reached Monghyr. At 4 o'clock in the morning I started thence to see Sitakunda, and arrived there at sunrise, after walking six miles from the boat. The water of the spring is

[1] October–November.

so hot that one cannot put one's hand in it. There is a railing all round. On asking the reason, the people of the place said, "The pilgrims sometimes jump into it, so this railing has been put up by order of the magistrate." After seeing this I again walked those six miles, and came back to the boat, hungry, thirsty, and tired.

Afterwards, as we were passing through the middle of the broad expanse of the Ganges at Fatua, a strong gale arose. The boat was hurriedly rowed towards land. But though it put to shore it was repeatedly knocked against the high banks by the violent squall. Seeing that it was about to break up, and could not be saved, I left the quivering boat and stood on the shore. But though the solid ground was under my feet there, the storm disturbed me sorely; the sand pelted and pierced my body like shot. Wrapping a thick sheet round me, I stood on shore and felt the glory of that "Terrible One with uplifted thunderbolt," the Supreme Deity, in the wild and fierce appearance of the river. The small boat that followed us sank with all our provisions. Afterwards we procured fresh supplies on arriving at Patna. There the current proved so strong that the boat could hardly move. Fighting against this tremendous current, we passed Patna and reached Benares on the 6th Agrahayan.[1]

It had taken us nearly a month and a half to get

[1] November–December.

to Benares from Calcutta. Early in the morning, taking all my things from the boat, I went in the direction of Sikrole,[1] looking about me for lodgings, or some place to stay in. After going some distance, I saw an empty dilapidated house standing in the midst of a garden. Some hermits were sitting there by the side of a well talking. I thought to myself, this house must be a public place where anybody can stay; so I established myself there with all my belongings. The next day Gurudas Mitra, son of the well-known Rajendra Mitra of Benares, came to see me. I wondered how he had come to know of my arrival here. I rose quickly, and cordially seated him by my side. He said, "You have done us honour by having chosen to stay in this house of ours. This house has neither doors, nor curtains, nor any protection, and the night air is cold. You must have passed the night in great discomfort. If I had known before that you were coming here, we should have had everything ready." He was very civil and kind, and insisted on making the place habitable. I stayed ten days in Benares, and was quite comfortable.

On the 17th Agrahayan I left Benares in a stage-coach. I sent home most of my servants and only took two of them with me on the top of the coach. These two were Kishorinath Chatterjee and a milk-man of Krishnagar. The next evening, on reaching

[1] The European quarters.

the right bank at Allahabad, I had my carriage hoisted upon a ferry-boat, for fear I should not get one early in the morning. I slept that night on the boat inside the carriage. Next morning, the ferry-boat started in a leisurely way, and reached the opposite bank at noon. On the sands underneath the Fort I saw several small flags flying; the pândâs earn money by saying that these flags are hoisted in the heaven-land of the pilgrim's fathers.

This is the holy land of Prayag; this is the famous Beni-ghat. At this spot on the river-side, people shave their heads, and give offerings on land and water to their ancestors, and distribute alms. As soon as my boat touched the shore, there was a regular invasion of pândâs, who boarded it. One of them laid hands on me saying, "Come and bathe here and shave your head." I said, "I have not come as a pilgrim, nor will I shave my head." "Pilgrim or not, give me some money," said another. "I shall give you nothing," I replied; "you are able to work and earn your bread." He said in Hindi, "I won't let you go without giving me money; you must give me something." I replied in the same language, "I shan't give you money; let's see how you take it from me." Upon this he jumped from the boat on to the land, and laying hold of the tow-rope, began to pull away hard with the others; after pulling for some time he ran up to me in the boat, and said, "Now I have done

some work, give me money." I laughed and gave him some money, saying, "That's right."

It was past midday, when with some difficulty we reached the ferry on the left bank of the Ganges. Then, after going four miles, we found a bungalow, and rested there. After leaving Allahabad, I reached Agra on the 22nd Agrahayan. My stage-coach used to travel day and night; in the middle of the day we would cook and eat our meal under a tree. At Agra I saw the Taj. This Taj is the *taj* (crown) of the world. Ascending a minaret, I saw the sun setting in the western horizon, making it one mass of red. Beneath was the blue Jumna. The pure white Taj in the midst, with its halo of beauty, seemed to have dropped on the earth from the moon.

I started for Delhi on the 26th by river. In the cold of Pausha I sometimes bathed in the Jumna, and the blood froze in my veins. The boat went its way, but I used to walk along the banks of the Jumna through the cornfields and villages and gardens, enjoying the beauty of nature. This filled my mind with great peace. In eleven days I reached the city of Mathura on the banks of the Jumna, and went immediately to see the town.

There is a rest-house for hermits on the banks of the river. From it one of them called out to me in Hindi, "Come here, and let us discuss the holy scriptures." I was eager to see Mathura at once, so

I passed on then without giving him any answer. On my way back I went to him. He brought out some manuscripts from his collection. I saw that they were all Hindi translations of Rammohan Roy's works. He began to recite the hymn of praise to Brahma, "*Namaste sate*," contained in the Mahanirvan Tantra. I found that our religious tenets were very much alike. I was surprised to meet a person like this on the roadside. I asked him to my boat, where he came and had his meal with me too, only I had to give him a little *kâran*.[1] Whilst drinking this wine he repeated, "He who drinks a drop of wine saves thirty million generations of ancestors!" He said, "I have practised the rites with dead bodies." He was a regular Tantrik. He slept that night in my boat, and rising early in the morning began muttering all sorts of things, and only went away after bathing in the Jumna.

After this I arrived at Brindâban. There I went to see the temple of Govindji, the famous fruit of Lala Babu's munificence. Four or five men were seated in the high music-chamber attached to the temple, listening to the *setâr*. They were rather startled to see that I did not bow down to Govindji.

A month after leaving Agra, my boat touched the sands of Delhi on the 27th Pausha. I saw a great crowd collected up above. The Badshah of Delhi was flying kites there. There was nothing

[1] The Tantric name for consecrated wine.

else to occupy him now; what was he to do? Going into the town of Delhi, I rented a house in the bazar. Nagendranath had come there to take me back home. I was staying over the bazar on the high road in Delhi town, but he had been unable to find me, and had gone back home disappointed. I heard of this afterwards.

Here I met Sukhananda Swami, a Tantrik Brahma worshipper, disciple of Harihara nanda Tirthaswami. Rammohan Roy was a great friend of this Harihara nanda, who used to stay in his garden-house, and whose youngest brother was Ramchandra Vidyávagish. As soon as I arrived in Delhi, Sukhananda Swami sent me some grapes and other delicacies. I also sent him presents, and went to see him. He in his turn came to visit me; and thus I came to meet and know him. Sukhananda Swami said, "I and Rammohan Roy are both disciples of Harihara nanda Tirthaswami; Rammohan Roy was a Tantrik like myself." All the different religious sects claim Rammohan Roy for their own.

The famous Kutab Minar is sixteen miles from here. I went to see it. This is a glorious work of the ancient Hindus. The Musulmans now say it is the pillar of victory of the Badshah Kutabuddin; hence it is called Kutab Minar. As the Musulmans have defeated the Hindus, so also have they destroyed their name and fame. Minar means a high column-like palace-tower. The Kutab Minar is nearly 161

cubits high. Ascending the topmost turret of the Minar, I was enraptured to see the marvellous vast plains beneath the semicircular horizon, proclaiming the glory of the Most High.

From here I went in a stage-coach to Umballa. Here I took a dooly and went to Lahore, taking only Kishorinath with me. Returning from Lahore I reached Amritsar on the 4th Falgun. It was then very cold there.

CHAPTER XXXII

Although I had come to Amritsar, yet my heart was set on that other Amritsar, that lake of immortality, where the Sikhs worship the Alakh Niranjan or Inscrutable Immortal One. Quite early in the morning, I hurried through the town to see that holy shrine of Amritsar. After wandering through several streets, I at last asked a passer-by where Amritsar was. He stared at me in surprise and said, "Why, this is Amritsar." "No," said I; "where is that Amritsar where God is worshipped with sacred chanting?" He replied, "The Gurudwara? Oh, that is quite near; go this way."

Taking the road indicated, and going past the bazar of red cloth shawls and scarves, I saw the golden spire of the temple shining in the morning sun. Keeping this in view, I arrived at the temple, and saw a big tank,[1] four or five times the size of the Laldighi in Calcutta. This was the lake. It is replenished by the waters of the river Iravati, flowing through the canal of Madhavapur. Guru

[1] Anything from a pond to an artificial lake is called a tank in Bengal.

Ramdas had this fine tank dug here, and called it Amritsar. Formerly it was called "Chak."

In the midst of the lake, like an islet, there is a white marble temple, which I entered by passing over a bridge. In front there was a huge pile of books covered over with a parti-coloured silk cloth. One of the chief Sikhs of the temple was waving a plume over it. On one side, singers were chanting from the sacred books. Punjabi men and women came and walked round the temple, and having made their salutations with offerings of shells and flowers, went away. Some stayed, and sang with devotion. Here all may come and go when they please; nobody asks them to come, nobody tells them not to. Christians and Mahomedans, all may come here; only according to the rules none may enter the bounds of the Gurudwara with shoes on. All the Sikhs felt deeply humiliated and aggrieved by this rule being transgressed by the Governor-General, Lord Lytton.

I again went to the temple in the evening, and saw that the *arati* or vesper ceremony was being performed. A Sikh was standing in front of the Books, with five-wick lamp in hand, performing the *arati*. All the other Sikhs stood with joined hands, repeating with him in solemn tones:

> In the disc of the sky,
> The sun and the moon shine as lamps;
> The galaxy of stars glitter like pearls,

The zephyr is incense, the winds are as fans,
All the woods are bright with flowers.
Oh Saviour of the world, Thine *arati*
Is wonderful indeed! Loud sounds the drum,
And yet no hand doth beat it!

My soul is ever panting and athirst for the honey of Hari's lotus-feet;
Give the waters of Thy mercy to the *chatak*[1] Nanak, so that I may dwell in Thy Name.

At the close of the *arati*, *kaḍa bhog* (a kind of sweetmeat) was distributed to all. The worship of God is carried on thus in the temple night and day for twenty-one hours; prayers being suspended for the last three hours of the night in order to cleanse the temple. In the Brâhma-Samaj, we have prayers for two hours in the week only; and in the Sikh temple of Hari, there is worship night and day. If any one feels restless and distressed, he can go there even at night, and pray, and find peace. This good example should be followed by the Brâhmas.

The Sikhs have no Guru or spiritual perceptor now. Their books occupy his place. Their tenth and last Guru was Guru Govinda. It was he that broke up the caste system of the Sikhs, and introduced the custom of initiation amongst them which goes by the name of "Pahal," and is still in existence. He who wants to became a Sikh must first perform the *pahal*. This custom is as follows: Sugar is thrown into a vessel filled with water, which is then

[1] The *chatak* is a bird said to drink no other water but rain.

stirred with a sword or knife, and sprinkled on those who are to become Sikhs. They all then drink this sugared water out of the same cup. Brâhman, Kshatriya, and Sudra, all may become Sikhs without distinction of caste. Mahomedans also can become Sikhs. Whoever becomes a Sikh is given the surname of Singh. There is no image in this temple of the Sikhs; for Nanak has said, "He cannot be placed anywhere, none can make Him; He is the Self-existent stainless One." But strange to say, having received these noble teachings of Nanak—and worshipping as they do the formless Brahma—the Sikhs have yet founded a temple of Shiva within the precincts of the Gurudwara. They also believe in the goddess Kali. It is no easy matter for anybody to keep this Brâhmic vow,—"I shall not worship any created thing, thinking it to be the supreme Deity." A great festival takes place in this temple during the Holi.[1] The Sikhs then give themselves up to drink. They take liquor, but do not smoke; do not even touch the *hookah* or *chillum*.

Many Sikhs used to come to my rooms, and I used to learn the Gurumukhi language and their religious doctrines from them. I did not find much religious zeal amongst them. I met one zealous Sikh, who said to me, "If one died weeping, without having tasted the immortal nectar, what then?" I

[1] Vaishnava spring festival.

said weeping and mourning for him would not have been in vain.

The lodgings I had found near Rambagan in Amritsar were not in very good condition. The house was dilapidated, the garden was in ruins, the trees grew in wild disorder. But to my fresh eyes and fresh ardour, everything appeared fresh and new and beautiful. When I walked in the garden at sunrise, when the white, yellow, and red poppies shed tears of dew, when the gold and silver flowers in the grass spread a carpet of gilded embroidery over the garden, when the winds of heaven came laden with honey to the garden, when the sweet echoes of Punjabi songs were wafted to the garden from afar —it seemed to me like some fairyland of old. Some days the peacocks and peahens would come from the woods and sit on my terrace-floor; their long variegated tails drooping to the ground and coloured with sunlight. Sometimes they would come down from the terrace and feed in the garden. I used to take some rice in my hand and go up to them fondly to feed them, but they would get frightened and fly away none knew whither, uttering their shrill cries. One day somebody warned me, saying, "Don't do that, they are very wicked. If they peck at all, they will peck at your eyes." On a cloudy day I saw the peacocks dancing, with wings raised above their heads. What a wonderful sight! If I could play the *vina* I would have done so, in time to their

dancing. I found that the poets were quite right in saying that peacocks begin to dance with delight as soon as the clouds gather. This is not only a fancy of theirs.

The month of Falgun passed away, and with the advent of the honey-month of Chaitra, the gates of spring were unbarred, and the south wind took advantage of this opportunity to mix the scent of the freshly-opened orange-blossoms with the scent of the mango-blossoms, and enliven the whole atmosphere with a wave of soft perfume. This is the breath of Him the Merciful. On the last day of Chaitra, I saw that the fairies had come, whence I know not, to the pond near my house; and were playing about in the water like swans, with cries of delight. Thus the stream of time flowed swiftly and happily on. The month of Vyshakha arrived. Then I began to feel the heat of the sun. From the second floor, where I was staying, I came down to the first floor. But in a short time the heat penetrated there also. I said to the landlord, "I can stay here no longer; it is getting hotter and hotter. I shall go away from here." He said, "There is an underground room; it is very pleasant there in the hot weather." I had not been aware till then of the existence of a room under the ground. He took me down there, where there was a room, exactly like the one above it on the first floor. Air and light entered from one side, and the room was quite cool. But I did not

care about living in it. I could not remain like a prisoner in a room underneath the ground. I want the open air, and a spacious room. A Sikh said to me, "Then go to the Simla hills,—that is a very cool place." Thinking this would be to my liking, I left for Simla on the 9th Vyshakha 1779 (A.D. 1857).

After three days' journey, leaving Panjaur behind, I arrived in the valley of Kalka on the 12th Vyshakha.[1] In front I saw the mountains barring the way. Their strange and charming scenery was displayed before me. I thought to myself with delight that next day I should ascend these, and leaving the earth, should place my foot on the first step of Heaven. In this delightful mood I passed that night, slept happily, and got rid of the fatigue of the journey.

[1] April–May.

CHAPTER XXXIII

But half the month of Vyshakha had passed away before I took a *jhampan* on the morning of the 16th, and began winding my way up the hills. The higher I climbed, the higher did my mind become. After ascending for some time, I found that they were descending again with me. I want to rise higher still and higher ; why then do those men take me down ? thought I. The *jhampanis* took me right down into the *khud* (valley), and put me down near a river. In front there was a higher hill, at the foot of which ran this little stream. It was then midday. The base of the hills was so heated by the fierce sun, that I felt very uneasy. The heat of the plains can be borne, but this heat was unbearable to me. There was a small grocer's shop here, where there was parched Indian corn for sale. It seemed to me that the corn must have got roasted by this hot sun. We cooked and ate our food by the river. Crossing the stream, we then began ascending the hill in front, and reached cooler regions.

We spent the night at a place called Haripur.

Beginning to travel next morning, we had our meal under a tree at noon, and arrived at the bazar of Simla in the evening. My *jhampan* stopped in the bazar, and the shopkeepers stared at me. I got out of the *jhampan*, and began to look at the things in their shops. My companion, Kishorinath Chatterjee, went to look for lodgings, and after arranging for some rooms in that very bazar, soon came and took me there. Here another year passed away.

Several Bengalis were employed there, many of whom came to see me. Peary Mohun Banerjee came to enquire after me every day. He was employed in an English shop there. One day he said to me, "There is a very beautiful waterfall here, which I can take you to see if you care to go." I went down the *khud* with him to see it. In the course of descent I saw there were human habitations here, interspersed with grain-fields. Here cows and buffaloes were grazing, there hill-women were threshing paddy. I was surprised to see this. This was the first time I came to know that there were villages and fields here as in our country. Thus looking about us, we reached the lowest part of the *khud*, and had our *jhampans* set down, as they could go no farther. Taking our mountain-sticks in hand now, we came slowly down to the waterfall below the rocks. Here the water was falling from a height of 300 cubits, broken into masses of foam by the obstruction which the stones offered to it, and the current was rushing

swiftly downwards. I sat on a stone, and watched this play of water. As the cool spray of the waterfall touched my body, perspiring from the exertion of descending the *khud*, I felt everything grow dark; and slowly sank down on the rock senseless. Shortly afterwards I came to myself and opened my eyes. I saw that my friend Peary Mohun Banerjee's face was quite pale, and he was gazing at me in great distress, not knowing what to do. I at once recalled our situation to mind, and laughed to give him courage. After thus seeing the waterfall, I came back to my lodgings.

The Sunday after that some of us again went to that waterfall for a picnic. I went and stood inside the falls, and the water fell on to my head from a height of 300 cubits. I stood there for five minutes, and the icy spray of water entered my body through every pore. Then I came out. But I thought it was great fun, and went in again. Thus I had my bath in the waterfall. We had a most enjoyable picnic in the mountain woods, and returned to our lodgings in the evening. There had been something wrong with my left eye before, and the next morning I found it was red and swollen. I cured my eye-disease by fasting. On the 3rd of Jaishtha, after getting rid of this indisposition, the vigour of health made me feel very happy in body and mind. Pacing to and fro in the open rooms, I was thinking that I could pass my whole life happily in this Simla house.

At this juncture I saw some people running along the road below my rooms. Seeing this I asked them, "What is the matter? Why are you running so hard?" But without replying, one of them waved his hand to me as much as to say "Fly! fly!" I asked, "Why should I fly?" But there was none to answer; all were anxious for the safety of their own lives.

Unable to understand what was up, I went to Pyari Babu for information. I saw that he had made a big mark on his forehead with plaster from the wall, and having brought the sacred thread out at the neck, was wearing it over his coat. His eyes were red and his face downcast. As soon as he saw me he said, "The Gurkhas respect Brâhmans." "What is the matter?" I asked. He replied, "The Gurkha soldiers are coming to pillage Simla. I have decided to go down the *khud*." "Then I shall go with you too," I said. This made him pull a longer face. His idea was to seek refuge in the *khud* alone: if both of us went together it would make the hill-men more covetous, and put our lives in danger. Guessing what was passing in his mind, I said, "No, I shall not go down the *khud*."

I returned to my lodgings, where I found the door locked. Being unable to enter, I began to walk up and down the road. Soon after Kishori came and said, "I have buried the money-bag in the ground near the oven, and heaped firewood on it, and I have

locked the Gurkha servant inside the room; the Gurkhas will do no harm to a Gurkha." "That is all right," I said, "but what are you doing to save your own life?" He replied, "I will get into this ditch by the roadside when the Gurkhas come, so that no one will see me."

I went up an ascent to see whether the Gurkhas were really coming or not, but could see nothing from there. Notice had been given to the effect that should the Gurkhas come to attack Simla, guns would be fired to warn everybody. Shortly after I heard the sound of heavy gunfire. Then, surrendering myself to God, I began to pace the road. Night fell, yet there was no disturbance; I went home and slept peacefully. On waking in the morning I found that I was alive, and the Gurkhas had not come to attack us. On going outside I found armed Gurkhas posted at the Government Treasury and other offices, and in the streets.

CHAPTER XXXIV

On the 1st day of Jaishtha news came to Simla that owing to the mutiny of the sepoys, a terrible massacre had taken place at Delhi and Meerut. On the 2nd Jaishtha, the Commander-in-Chief, General Arson, after having clean-shaved himself, mounted a country pony and rode up to Simla. There was a Gurkha regiment stationed very close to Simla, and on his way he ordered their captain to disarm them. The Gurkhas were innocent, and had no connection whatever with the sepoys. The sahibs imagined that black sepoys were all one, and thoughtlessly ordered the Gurkhas to be disarmed. As soon as the captain ordered the Gurkhas to lay down their arms, they thought themselves insulted and dishonoured. They thought they were going to be disarmed first and then blown to pieces by cannon ; and with this idea they all became united in thought and deed, for fear of their lives. They disobeyed the captain, and did not lay down their guns. Moreover, they secured and bound the English officers, and came to attack Simla on the 3rd Jaishtha.

At this news the Bengalis of Simla began to fly with their families in fear and terror. The Mussulmans of the place thought that they were going to regain their supremacy. A tall white Irani with a huge beard came from somewhere or other, and in order to please me said, "They have made the Mussulmans eat pork and the Hindus eat cows; we shall see now what becomes of the Feringhees." A Bengali came up to me and said, "You were safe and sound at home; why did you come here amidst all this trouble? We have never seen such a disturbance before." I said, "I am alone, there is no fear for me. But those who are here with their families, it is for them I am anxious. Their danger is great."

The Englishmen of the place, in order to defend Simla, assembled on a high hill with their ladies, and set guards all round it. But instead of looking to their guns, they gave themselves up to drinking, merry-making, shouting, and boasting. It was Lord Hay, the cool-headed and able Commissioner of the place, who saved Simla. When the gunfire announced the arrival of the Gurkha troops in Simla, he, dismissing all fear for his own life, appeared hat in hand salaaming before that body of soldiers, who were like a herd of wild elephants without a driver; appeased them with soft words of assurance, and put them in charge of the Treasury and other offices with a trustful heart. The sahibs were highly indignant with

Lord Hay for this, and said, "Lord Hay has not acted wisely, he has placed our lives and property and honour all at the mercy of our rebellious enemies, and has cast a slur on the British name by showing such weakness to them. If he had left it to us, we would have driven them away."

A Bengali came and said to me, "Sir, though the Gurkhas have got all their rights, yet they are not appeased. They are abusing the English right and left." I said, "They have no shepherd, they are soldiers without a captain; let them rave, they will soon cool down." But the sahibs were quite overcome with fear, and in their despair they determined that since the Gurkhas had occupied Simla flight was the only means of saving their lives; and to this end they began flying from Simla. At midday I saw many Englishmen running in terror down the *khud* without *jhampan* or *dandi*, or horse, or escort of any kind. Who was there to help or look after any one else? All were taken up with their own safety. By evening Simla was quite deserted. That Simla which had been full of the sounds of men now became silent and still. Its broad sky was filled only with the cawing of crows.

Since Simla had become empty of human beings, I too would have to go perforce to-day. Even if the Gurkhas did not molest us, yet the hillmen might come up from the *khud*, and rob us of everything. But where could bearers be found that day? I was

not so frightened as to feel impelled to fly on foot from Simla if no bearers were to be had. At this juncture a dark, tall man with red eyes came up to me and said, "Do you want coolies?" I said, "Yes, I do." "How many?" "I want twenty." "Very well, I shall bring them; you must give me *backsheesh*," saying which he went away. In the meantime I engaged a dooly for myself. After dinner, I lay down in an anxious frame of mind. It was midnight when I heard cries of "Open the door, open the door," accompanied by a banging at the door. They made a great noise. My heart began to beat fast—I was seized with a great fear—perhaps the Gurkhas would take my life now. I opened the door in trepidation, and saw that the tall, dark man had come with twenty coolies, and was shouting for us. I was freed from all anxiety for my life. They slept in my room the whole night as my guard. God's mercy towards me was made plainly manifest.

Day broke, and I made ready to leave Simla. The coolies said they wouldn't go unless they got money in advance. In order to pay them I began calling out, "Kishori, Kishori"; but where was Kishori? The money for daily expenses was with him, and I had a box full of money with me. I had thought I would not show such a lot of money to the coolies. But there was no Kishori, and the coolies would not move without money. So I opened the box there and gave Rs. 3 to each, and

Rs. 5 to the headman. At this moment Kishori turned up. "Where had you gone away at such a time of danger?" I asked. He said, "A tailor wanted 4 annas[1] too much for making my clothes, so it took a long time to settle with him."

I got into that dooly and set out for another hill called Dagshahi. After travelling the whole day, the coolies set me down in the evening near a waterfall, while they drank water and began to talk and laugh amongst themselves. Not being able to understand a word of their speech, I thought that perhaps they were conspiring to kill me, and take all the money. If they were to throw me down into the *khud* from this lonely forest, nobody would know. This proved, however, to be only a false alarm of my own imagining. Having drank water and regained strength they put me down in a bazar at midnight; after passing the night there I again went on. Some loose silver and copper coins had fallen from my pocket and become scattered on the bed, which the coolies picked up and brought to me. This inspired me with the greatest confidence in them.

At noon I reached Dagshahi. They put me down by a tiled hut, and went away. In the evening Kishori came up to where I was. I got a tumble-down room to stay in, and a rope stretcher to lie down on. In this I passed the night. Then in the

[1] Four pence.

morning I rose and went to the top of the hill. There I found that the English soldiers had made a circular fort, by placing empty wine-boxes all round. A flag was flying from it, and a soldier was standing below, drawn sword in hand. Quietly scaling that wall of boxes, I entered the fort and went up to the soldier in some fear, thinking that he might perhaps use his sword on me. But he asked me in a very sad and dejected manner, "Are the Gurkhas coming here?" "No, they have not yet come here," I replied. I came out from there and found a small cave, inside which I sat in the shade. In the evening I came down to the foot of the hill, and slept in my room. It rained a little that night, and the room was no shelter at all. Water fell through the broken roof.

Thus the days and nights wore on in my forest exile. Two Bengalis, a Ghose and a Bose, were employed in the post-office here, after their return from the Kabul War. They came to see me. Bose said, "I narrowly escaped with my life, on my way back from the Kabul War. In the course of my flight I saw an empty house on the road to Kabul, entering which I hid myself on the top of a sort of loft. The Kabulis found me out there, and very nearly killed me. I managed to come away alive with the greatest difficulty. And now there comes this fresh trouble!" As long as I stayed there, Ghose used to come and make enquiries every day.

One day I asked, "Well, Ghose, what news to-day?" "Not very good news," he replied. "They have set fire to the mails." Next day I asked, "What news to-day, Ghose?" He said, "To-day the news is not very good. The rebels must be coming to-day from Jullundur." One never got good news from Ghose. Every day he would come with a long face. I spent eleven days in this way, in great anxiety. Then news came that Simla was safe, and there was no longer any fear.

I began to make preparations for going back to Simla. On sending for coolies, I was told there were none to be had. They had decamped for fear of cholera. I got a horse on which I mounted and started in the afternoon. After coming a short way, I stayed the night at a halting-station, and rode on again the next morning. Kishori was not with me. The heat of the sun in that month of Jaishtha was very fierce on the bare hills. I longed for a little shade, but there was not a single tree to give it me. My throat was parched with thirst, but there was not a soul near to hold my horse for a minute. After going on in this state till midday, I came to a bungalow. Tying up the horse near by, I went in there to rest. I was asking for a little water, when a fugitive lady whom chance had brought there, moved by fellow-feeling in adversity, sent me some butter and hot potatoes and a little water, by partaking of which I allayed my hunger and thirst, and

revived. I reached Simla in the evening. Standing in front of the door I called out, "Kishori, where are you? Are you there?" and Kishori came and opened the door. I returned to Simla from Dagshahi on the 18th day of Jaishtha.

CHAPTER XXXV

On my return to Simla I said to Kishorinath Chatterjee, "Within a week I shall travel farther north towards the higher ranges. You must accompany me. Order a *jhampan* for me and a horse for yourself." "Very well, sir," he replied, and set about making the necessary arrangements. The 25th Jaishtha was the date fixed for our departure from Simla. I got up very early that morning and made ready to start. My *jhampan* was at the door, and the coolies all present. "Where is your horse?" I asked Kishori. "It'll be here just now, it'll be here just now," he kept saying, looking anxiously towards the road. An hour passed, and yet no sign of his horse. I could not stand this delay and hindrance in my journey any longer. I saw that Kishori was unwilling to go farther north with me for fear of the great cold. I said to him, "You think I shall not be able to go on my travels alone, if you don't accompany me. I don't want you, you can stay here. Give me the keys of my boxes and trunks." Taking the keys

from him I went and sat in the *jhampan*, and said, "Take up the *jhampan*." The *jhampan* was raised, the coolies carried my luggage along, and the bewildered Kishori stood there dumbfounded. With feelings of delight and enthusiasm I passed through the bazar, looking about me, and left Simla behind.

On arriving at a certain hill, after travelling two hours, I found that the bridge leading to the neighbouring hill was broken, there was no further roadway. The *jhampanis* put down the *jhampan*. Must I then go back from this point? The *jhampanis* said, "If you can cross the bridge by walking along the broken edge, we can go down the valley with the empty *jhampan*, and catch you up on the other side." I was so full of ardour then, that I nerved myself to carry out this proposal. There was just room for placing one foot on the ledge, but no support for the hands on either side, and a terribly deep *khud* below, which by the grace of God I crossed over safely. By God's grace verily "the cripple can cross mountains," and I was not thwarted in my determination to travel. Thence I began to ascend the mountain gradually. It rose up quite straight like a wall to such a height, that from there even the *kelu* trees in the *khud* below appeared like small shrubs. Close by there was a village, from which some tigerish dogs ran out barking. In front the stark steep hill, below the awful *khud*, up above the threatening dogs! In

fear and trepidation I traversed this dangerous road.

After midday, on arriving at an empty traveller's bungalow, we stopped for the day. I had no cook with me. The *jhampanis* said, "Our bread is very sweet." I took one of their cakes made of Indian corn and oats. A portion of that was my meal for the day, and was quite enough for me :

A piece of dry bread, with or without salt, what matter ?
When you have given your head, why cry over it ?

After a little while some hill-people came up to me from the village hard by, and began to dance about in great glee with various contortions of the body. I noticed that one of them had no nose, his face was quite flat. "What's the matter with your face ?" I asked. He said, "A bear slapped me on the face," and pointing to a road in front of me, "the bear came that way, and as I went for him, he took off my nose with his paws." How he danced, and how joyful he was with that broken face! I was greatly pleased with the simple nature of these hill-people.

Leaving this place the next morning, I reached a hill-top in the afternoon, and stayed there. A lot of village people came and sat round me. They said, "Our life here is a very hard one. At all times when it snows, we have to wade knee-deep through the snow ; and during harvest-time boars and bears come and spoil our crops. At night we keep watch over our fields from the top of a bamboo-

rick." Their village was situated in the *khud* of that hill. They said to me, "Come to our village; there you will be comfortable in our home, here you will suffer great discomfort." But I did not go to their village so late in the evening. The hill-track could only be climbed with great trouble; so, in spite of my eagerness, I was deterred by the difficulty of the road. Women were scarce in their part of the country. Like the Pandavas, all the brothers marry one wife, and the children of that wife call them all father.

I stayed on the hill-top that night, and left in the morning. That day the *jhampanis* travelled till noon, and then put down the *jhampan*, saying, "The road is broken, we can't go any farther." What was to be done? The hillside was a sheer ascent, without even a footpath. The road was broken, and beyond there lay only stones piled on stones. But in spite of the dangerous road I could not go back. I began to walk up that broken road over the stones; a man supporting me from behind by the waist. After trudging upwards like this for three hours, I came to the end of the broken road, and found a bungalow on the top. Inside there was a sofa, on which I lay down as soon as I got there. The *jhampanis* went to the village and brought me a cup of milk; but over-exertion had taken away my appetite, and I could not drink it. As I had thrown myself on the sofa, so I lay the whole night,

without rising once. In the morning I felt a little stronger ; the *jhampanis* brought a cup of milk which I drank and then left the place. Going higher up I reached Narkhanda that day. This is a very high peak, and I found it exceedingly cold.

The next morning, after taking some milk, I started on foot. Soon I came to a deep forest, through which the pathway led. Some broken rays of the sun pierced through the foliage and fell on the path, enhancing the beauty of the scenery. As I walked along I saw huge old uprooted trees lying prone here and there on the ground ; many a young tree also had been burnt by the forest fire and destroyed ere its prime. After walking a long way, I got into the *jhampan* and penetrated farther into the forest. Looking through it as I ascended the hill, I could see only mighty trees covered with dense green foliage, without a single flower or fruit. Only on a certain kind of big tree called the *kelu*,[1] a sort of ugly green fruit is to be seen, which even birds do not eat. But the various kinds of grass and plants that grow on the hillside are very beautiful, and countless flowers bloom there in profusion. White, red, yellow, blue, and gold, blossoms of all colours, attract the eye from all directions. The mark of God's most skilful hand seemed evident in the grace and beauty of these flowers, and their stainless purity. Though these did not possess a

[1] The Himalayan fir.

scent equal to their beauty, another, a kind of white rose, bloomed in bunches throughout the wilderness, and made the whole forest-land fragrant with perfume. These white roses were only a cluster of four petals. In some places the *chameli* (jasmine) also gave forth its scent. Here and there the small fruit of the strawberry shone like bits of red stone. A servant who was with me gave me the flowering branch of a creeper. I had never seen such a beautiful flowering creeper before. My eyes were opened, and my heart expanded ; I saw the Universal Mother's hand resting on those small white blossoms. Who was there in this forest to inhale the scent of these flowers or see their beauty ? Yet with what loving care had she endowed them with sweet scent and loveliness, moistened them with dew, and set them upon the creeper ! Her mercy and tenderness became manifest in my heart. Lord ! when such is Thy compassion for these little flowers, what must be the extent of Thy mercy for us ?

Thy mercy will endure in my heart and soul for ever and ever.

Thy mercy has pierced my soul so deeply, that even though I were to lose my head, it would never depart from within my heart.

I repeated this verse of Hafiz aloud the whole day on my way, and remained steeped in the waters of His mercy till evening, when shortly before sunset I reached a peak called Sunghri. How and

when the day passed away I knew not. From this high peak I was enchanted with the beauty of two mountain ranges facing each other. One of the hills contained a deep forest, the abode of bears and suchlike wild animals. Another hill was coloured gold from top to bottom with ripe fields of wheat. Scattered upon it at long distances were villages consisting of ten or twelve huts grouped together, shining in the sun. Some hills, again, were covered with short grasses from head to foot. Other hills, by their very nakedness, heightened the beauty of their wooded neighbours. Each mountain was standing serenely in the pride of its own majesty, without fear of any one. But the wayfarers on its bosom were in a state of continual fear, like the servants of a king,—one false step meant destruction. The sun set, and darkness began gradually to steal across the earth. Still I sat alone on that peak. From afar the twinkling lights here and there upon the hills alone gave evidence of human habitation.

The next morning I began to descend on foot the hill that was wooded. It is as easy to go down as it is difficult to climb a hill. On this hill there were only forests of *kelu* trees. But it should not be called a forest, for it was better than a garden. The *kelu* tree is straight and tall as the *devadaru*. Its branches reach up to the top, and are decorated with casuarina[1]-like leaves, growing thickly, but each

[1] The only tree resembling a fir known in Bengal.

one no bigger than a needle. Covered with dense foliage, and outspread like the wings of a big bird, its branches bear the weight of a great load of snow in winter, yet instead of its leaves being seared and faded by the snow, they become more vigorous, and remain evergreen. Is this not wonderful? What work of God is not wonderful? From the foot of this hill to its top these trees stand quietly in rows like soldiers. Is it possible for any garden made by human hands to possess the grandeur and beauty of such a sight? These *kelu* trees have no flowers. They are forest trees, and the fruit they bear is of a very inferior kind. Still we gain much benefit from them, for they produce tar.

After walking some distance I got into the *jhampan.* On the way I saw a waterfall suitable for bathing, so I bathed in its frozen ice-cold water and gained fresh vigour, and purified myself by worshipping Brahma. A herd of goats and *obis* were passing by; my *jhampani* caught hold of a milch-goat and brought it to me, saying, "We can get milk from this." I got only a quarter of a seer of milk from it. I was surprised to get my accustomed milk after prayers on the roadside, and drank it with thanks to the good God. "May I not forget that Thou art the giver to all creatures." I then walked on. At the end of the wood I came upon a village, and was delighted to find once more ripe fields of wheat, oats, and other crops. Here and there were opium fields.

In one field women were cutting the ripe crops contentedly, in another the peasants were drawing the plough over the earth in expectation of future harvest. Getting into the *jhampan* again on account of the sun, I reached a hill called Boali nearly at midday. This was much below Sunghri. At the foot of this hill was the river Nagari, and close by, under the other hills, flowed the river Sutlej. From the top of Boali hill the Sutlej appeared only a yard wide, and glittered like silver-leaf in the rays of the sun. On the banks of this river there is a town called Rampur, which is celebrated here, as being the capital of the Raja who is lord of all these hills. The hill on which Rampur is situated could be seen close by, but to go there one would have to traverse many downward tracks. This Raja was about twenty-five years of age, and knew a little English. From Rampur the Sutlej passes through Sohini, the capital city of the Rana of Bhajji, and then dropping to Bilaspur it leaves the mountains and flows through the Punjab.

The day before I had continually descended from Sunghri to Boali; to-day also I began descending the hill in the morning, and reached the banks of the river Nagari in the afternoon. The mighty current of this stream, dashing against the huge elephantine rocks contained in its bosom, becomes fierce and foaming, and with a thundering sound rolls on to meet the sea, by command of the

Almighty. From both its banks two mountains rise up straight to a great height like immense walls, and then incline backwards. The rays of the sun do not find room enough to remain here long. A charming bridge was hanging over the river, by means of which I crossed over to the other side, and rested in a neat and clean little bungalow. This valley is very pretty and very lonely. Within twenty miles of it there is not a single human being or habitation. Only one man was living there with his family in one room, which was not a room, but a cave in the rocks. Here they cooked, and here they slept. I saw his wife dancing joyfully with a baby on her back, and another child of hers running about laughing on a dangerous part of the hill, and his father sowing potatoes in a small field. God had provided everything necessary for their happiness here. Kings sitting on their thrones rarely found such peace and happiness as this.

In the evening I was walking alone on the banks of this river, charmed with its beauty, when I looked up suddenly and found the hill was lighted up with flames. As the evening wore on and night advanced the fires also began to spread. Like arrows of fire, a hundred thousand sparks fell swift as stars, and attacked the trees below, down to the banks of the river. By degrees every tree cast off its own form and assumed the form of fire, and blind darkness fled afar from that spot. As I looked upon this

wonderful form of fire I felt the glory of that Divinity Who dwells in fire. Before this, in many a wood, I had seen charred trees that bore witness to forest-fires, and in the night I had seen the beauty of fires burning on distant hills; but here I was delighted to see for myself the origin, spread, growth, and arrest of a forest-fire. It went on burning all night; whenever I woke up during the night, I saw its light. When I got up in the morning I saw many charred trees still smoking, and here and there the all-devouring ravenous fire burning in a dim and exhausted manner, like the lamps remaining in the morning after a festive night.

I went and bathed in the river, pouring water from it over my head with a brass pot. The water was so icy-cold that it seemed as if the brain in my head got congealed. My ablutions and prayers over, I drank some milk, and left the place. Again ascending continually during the morning, I reached a terribly high peak called Dârun (terrible) Ghat at noon, and saw in front another monstrously high snow-clad mountain crest, which with head upraised like an uplifted thunder-bolt proclaimed the awful majesty of God.

Arriving at Dârun Ghat on the first day of Ashad,[1] I saw snow falling from the clouds clinging to the snow-clad mountain in front. Even for Simla people snowfall in Ashad is unusual, because before the end

[1] June–July.

of Chaitra[1] the Simla hills divest themselves of their snowy drapery, and in Vyshakha put on their lovely spring dress. On the 2nd Ashad I descended from this hill to another hill called Sirahan. There is a house here belonging to the Rana of Rampur, who sometimes comes there to enjoy the cool breezes when the heat in Rampur becomes excessive. In the hot weather the foot of the hills is hotter even than our part of the country, and it is only on the mountain-top that the air is cool all the year round.

Leaving this on the 4th Ashad, I returned safely to my Simla lodgings on the 13th by the grace of God, and knocked at the closed door. Kishori opened it and stood before me. "Why, your face is quite black," I said. "I did not remain here," he answered. "When I disobeyed your orders and was unable to accompany you I was filled with remorse, and felt miserable. I couldn't bear to stay here any longer, so I went down the hill to Jwalamukhi. There I was roasted by the flames of Jwalamukhi and the heat of the Jaishtha sun. That is why I have come back black in the face. It has served me right. As I have sown, so I have reaped. I am much to blame, and have given you great offence. I cannot hope that your honour will let me stay with you any more." I laughed and said, "You need not be afraid, I forgive you. Stay with me as you used to."

He said, "When I went down I left a servant

[1] March–April.

here in these lodgings, but on my return I found he had decamped. The doors were all shut ; on opening them and entering the house I saw that our clothes and boxes were all there, he had taken nothing away. I came here only three days ago." I was startled to hear this. If I had arrived three days earlier, I should have been put to great inconvenience. My heart overflowed with gratitude to think how many physical dangers God had delivered my body from during these twenty days of mountaineering ; how many sublime lessons of patience and fortitude, piety and unworldliness He had taught my mind, and how much He had purified and elevated my soul by His delightful companionship. I saluted Him reverently, and going inside began to sing His praises.

CHAPTER XXXVI

The rainy season now commenced in the Himalayas, and God's waterworks came into play night and day. Hitherto I had always seen clouds overhead ; now I saw white vaporous clouds rising from the foot of the lowest hills. I was surprised to see this. Gradually they enveloped the hill up to the top ; and I actually saw the kingdom of Indra surrounded by clouds, as imagined by the seers of old. Shortly afterwards rain fell, and the clouds cleared. Again they rose like cotton-wool from the hills and covered everything. Immediately after there was rain, then again the sun shone forth. During the heavy rains of Shravana, perhaps a fortnight would pass without the sun being visible. Then everything would be so wrapped in clouds that it seemed as if there was nothing in creation except myself, and with me there was only God. At this time my mind easily became detached from the world, and my soul naturally became collected, and rested in the Supreme Spirit. In the month of Bhadra there was a great noise of rushing waters amidst the matted locks of the

Himalayas, its springs were all full-bodied, its waterfalls let loose, its roadways difficult to travel. In Ashwin there is not much display of autumn here. From the month of Kartik one began to feel the cold wind to be too cold for one's bare body, and before the month of Agrahayan was half through, one morning after getting up, I came out and saw with delighted eyes that the hill from top to bottom was covered with snow. The lord of the mountains had robed himself in a garment of silver white. For the first time I drew in a breath of ice-cold air.

As time passed on the cold increased. One day I saw snow falling like light, carded cotton-wool from the black clouds. Having only seen frozen water before in the shape of ice, I had thought it to be heavy and hard as stone, but now I found it to be thin and light as wool. By shaking one's clothes the snow falls off, leaving them dry as before. On awaking one morning in the month of Pausha I found that three or four feet of snow had fallen and blocked all the roads. Coolies came and cleared a path by cutting through the snow, and then traffic was resumed. Overcome by curiosity I walked on the snow-clad road, and did not give up my morning promenade. My feeling of elation and delight made me walk so far and so briskly, that I began to feel hot in the winter amidst the snow, and my underclothing got wet with perspiration. This is a proof

of my bodily health and strength at that time. Every morning I used to walk a great distance thus joyfully, and then take tea and milk. At noon, whilst bathing, I would pour iced water with my own hands over my head. For a second the blood in my heart would stop circulating, then again it would go on with redoubled quickness, and instil greater vigour and energy into my body. Even in the cold of Pausha and Magha I would not allow the fire to be lighted in my room. I followed this rule in order to find out for myself how much cold the human body is capable of bearing, and to acquire habits of endurance and fortitude. At night I used to leave my bedroom windows open; and I enjoyed the cold night wind very much indeed. Wrapping myself in a blanket, and sitting up in bed oblivious of all else, I spent half the night reciting hymns and the verses of Hafiz. It is the holy man who keeps awake, not the man of pleasure nor the sick man. "He who knows Brahma, who contemplates Brahma, who drinks the nectar of delight in Brahma, who loves Brahma,—he it is that wakes."

The lamp that turns night into day, in whose chamber is that lamp?

It has burnt my life to ashes; to whom, I ask, has it brought delight?[1]

Those nights in which I felt His intimate companionship I repeated aloud in ecstasy:

[1] Hafiz.

Do not bring a lamp into my audience-hall to-day.
To-night, that full moon my Friend is shining here.[1]

The nights I spent thus delightfully, and in the daytime remained plunged in deep meditation. Every day till noon I sat rigidly with folded limbs, and concentrated my mind on the consideration and examination of the first principles of the soul. Finally, I came to this conclusion, that thoughts which were opposed to first principles could not be entertained in the mind at all. The latter were not any man's individual way of thinking; they were universally true for all time. The authenticity of first principles did not depend on anything else; they were self-evident, and proved themselves, since they were founded on spiritual consciousness. Relying on these first principles the ancient sages of the Upanishads have said:

This is the glory of that Supreme Deity, by Whom the wheel of this universe is made to revolve.

Deluded by ignorance, some thinkers say it is by the laws of nature—by the blind force of matter—that this wide world goes round; or others say that it is without any cause, by the force of Time alone. But I say—it is the glory of that Supreme Deity alone, by Whom this universal wheel is being turned:

The whole world has come forth from the Living God. It exists by the power of the Living God.

[1] Hafiz.

This Divine Being, Maker of the Universe, Supreme Soul, dwells for ever in the hearts of men.

These irrefutable truths concerning first principles have overflowed from the pure hearts of the Rishis.

The tree that stands in front of us we see and touch ; but we can neither see nor touch the space in which it stands. In course of time the tree puts forth branches and leaves, and bears flowers and fruit ; we see all this, but cannot see the thread of time which runs through all. We see the power of the life-force by which the tree is enabled to draw sap from its roots and nourish itself, the force which operates in every vein of its leaves ; but that force we cannot see. That conscious Being, by Whose will the tree has received this life-force—He Himself pervades the tree through and through, but Him we cannot see :

This secret Spirit exists in all creatures and in all things ; but He is not revealed.

The senses perceive only outward things, they cannot perceive that which is within. This is their shame :

The self-existent God has made senses face outwards ; hence they see outward things alone, not the soul within.

Sometimes a wise man, desirous of immortality, closes his eyes and sees a Spirit dwelling in all things.

Hearing this precept, laying it to heart, and pondering deeply upon it, I saw God, not with fleshly eyes, but with the inner vision, from these Himalayan

Hills, the holy land of Brahma. This was given me by the Upanishads. They say, "All things are enveloped in God." I enveloped all things with God. "Now I have come to know that great sun-coloured Being beyond this darkness."

Henceforward I shall radiate light from my heart upon the world ;

For I have reached the Sun, and darkness has vanished.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Towards the end of Magha, when I was absorbed in meditation on Brahma, a man of quality came to see me, with gold bangles on both wrists. "I am the minister, the vizier of the Rana of Bhajji," said he. "The Rana Sahib has sent me to invite you; he wishes to meet you. Bhajji is not very far from here, and I will make suitable arrangements for a comfortable journey." I accepted his invitation, and the date of departure was fixed. The vizier came to fetch me on the appointed day. We began descending from Simla to the valley below, he on his horse and I in my *jhampan*. The descent was unending; the lower we went, the farther down we had to go. When at last we came to the river bank, I knew we should have to descend no farther. On the banks of this river Sutlej lay Sohini, the capital of the Rana. We arrived there in the dusk of evening.

The next morning I entered the palace. The people there took me first of all to the quarters of the royal guru. Before I had reached the door, the

royal guru Sukhanandanath came and welcomed me with open arms, and taking me upstairs made me sit by him. This was the Sukhanandanath I met at Delhi, who used to stay with his guru Hariharananda Tirthaswami in Rammohan Roy's garden. He was a Tantrik Brahma worshipper. He believed in the *Adwaita* creed of the Mahanirvana Tantra. Hearing that I was in Simla, he had asked the Rana to send me an invitation. He had hoped to have a jolly time in my company, feasting and drinking, and thought that we should be drawn together by feelings of conviviality and friendliness. He did not know that I did not touch wine, and that in my opinion drinking was not right :

> Give not wine, take not wine, touch not wine at all.

Their merriment and high spirits were damped by my inability to join in their carousal. They were greatly disappointed and grieved at this, and charged Kishori with making separate arrangements for my food. Sukhananda expressed great dissatisfaction with the Sanskrit commentaries I had written on the Kathopanishad, and said that they were not in agreement with Shankaracharya's commentaries, therefore they were not to be held in esteem. He showed me a Hindi translation he had made of the Book of Brâhma Dharma, and requested me to publish it. When I took leave of him, he came downstairs with me, and asked me to see a room on the first floor.

On entering it I saw a beautiful print hanging on the wall in front, with "*Om tat sat*"[1] written in big gold Devanagri characters in the middle. Sukhananda entered this room very reverently. He also said, "We have built a Kalighat here on the banks of the river, like the Kalighat in Calcutta," but I said I could not go to see it.

Then I bade him good-bye, and went to see the Rana. Chairs were arranged in a spacious hall, in which the Rana greeted me with his courtiers. He made me sit down on a chair, the others also sat on separate chairs. Soon after the Rajkumar, like Kumar[2] himself, came and adorned the audience-hall. The Rana Sahib said to me, "The Kumar is learning Sanskrit; examine him a little," upon which the Kumar said, "I have gone through the whole grammar." I said, "Tell me, what form will the words '*ganga udakam*' take when joined in *Sandhi*?" "*Gangodakam*," he replied, quickly and loudly. After taking leave of the Rana I returned to my rooms, and had my bath and breakfast.

Next morning I went alone for a walk on the banks of the river Sutlej. It was about as broad here as the river Jalangi in Krishnagar; its waters were as blue and bright and clear as the sea. Like the poet Valmiki's river Tamasâ, "clear as the minds of the good" was an apt simile for the waters

[1] Om! He is the only reality.

[2] The god of war, one of the handsomest figures in the Bengal Pantheon.

of the river Sutlej here. I crossed the river on a water-skin. Wooden boats were of no use in this river, because big rocks were embedded in its course. Water-skins were the only possible means of crossing over. On reaching the other side I found the water there as hot as the Sitakunda of Monghyr. Particularly strange is the fact that, as the river swells and broadens in the rains, and occupies the place of the hot water, the latter also advances in a line with it and remains hot along the bank. I saw many sick people had come to bathe there. They say it cures many kinds of diseases.

The head of the mountain landlords was the Raja. Next came the Rana, then the *thakur*, and last the *zemindar*. Here the zemindars are the tillers of the soil. The zemindars[1] of Hindustan are in the same hard case. In the hills the Raja and Ranas have more power, and it is they who govern the cultivators. At the time of their marriage, the bride is given away with girl companions. The son born to the Rani becomes the Raja or Rana, and those born to the companions live in the Raja's family, and are supported all their life. The daughters born to the companions are known as the companions of the Raja's daughter, and have to bestow their life and youth on the husband of the princess. What a shameful business! The Raja

[1] In Bengal the zemindar is lord of a large landed estate. Hence the use of the term in quite a different sense in upper India strikes the Bengali as curious.

and the Rana have many Ranis, and thus many companions. When the one husband dies, they all remain shut up like prisoners, and weep all their lives. There is no means of deliverance for them.

I stayed there for a week. Then I took leave of the Rana and royal guru, and began ascending towards Simla. On the way I entered a forest, where I saw the Rajkumar, with jewelled ear-rings, diamond necklace, strings of pearls, and handsome clothes, going about hunting from one part of the woods to another. In the rays of the sun his fresh young face glowed and looked very charming. He seemed to me just like a forest god. One moment I saw him, the next he plunged into the woods, now he was near, then far away, now down below, again up on the hills. I climbed up the narrow broken footpath with great difficulty, and arrived safely in Simla. On the roads up there I found snow lying, even in that month of March. The trees and plants were all faded and sapless, and their branches rattled in the wind like the hollow shoots of the bamboo.

As the month of April came to an end, the whole land blossomed forth into a lovely garden. Again I saw the new year. A year had been spent in the same rooms which I had entered last year in May. Now I left these bazar lodgings, and rented a bungalow in a beautiful and quiet spot on the top of the hill, which I liked very much. On that hill-

top there was only one tree, which became the friend of my solitude. In this month of May, after my noonday meal, I used to wander through the gardens of all the empty houses. How can my countrymen of Bengal understand the mystery of walking about under the midday sun of May, with a woollen overcoat on? Sometimes I would spend half the day absorbed in contemplation, sitting on a stone slab near some lonely hill.

One day during my wanderings I came upon a path leading through a wooded hill, and immediately began to walk along it, following the impulse of the moment. It was then 4 o'clock in the afternoon. I was so taken up with walking that I went on and on without stopping. One footstep succeeded another, but I was not aware of it. Where I was going, how far I had come, how far I should go—that I did not calculate. After a long time I saw a wayfarer, who went in the direction opposite to mine. This interrupted the course of my meditation, and I returned to consciousness. I then saw that it was evening and the sun had set. Must I not retrace the whole long way? I turned and walked back quickly, but night also gained quickly on me. Hill, forest, and glade, all were covered with darkness. Like a lamp in that darkness the half-moon accompanied me on my journey. No sound was to be heard on any side, save that of my footsteps crackling on the dry leaves of the road. A solemn

feeling was aroused in my breast, together with that of fear. With thrilling heart I saw the eyes of God within that forest. His sleepless gaze was fixed upon me. Those eyes were my guide in this difficult path. Fearless in the midst of many fearsome things, I reached home before 8 o'clock at night. This gaze of His has become rooted indelibly in my heart. Whenever I fall into trouble, I see those eyes of His.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AGAIN the clouds and lightning of July and August began to display their pageantry, and successive showers of rain beat on the hills. By the Eternal Being's behest, the weeks, months, seasons, and years revolve in their course ; nothing can resist His ruling power. At this time I used to wander about the rocky caves, and enjoy the varied and marvellous beauty of the rivers and waterfalls. In the rains these mighty torrents carry huge blocks of stone along. Nothing can obstruct their impetuous course ; they forcibly fling aside whatever comes in their way.

One day in the month of September I went down the *khud*, and standing on the bridge of a river, was filled with wonder to see the indomitable strength and playful whirls of its current. Oh ! how pure and white is the river here. How naturally clear and cool its waters. Why then does it dash downwards in order to deprive itself of this purity ? The lower it goes, the more will it become defiled and tainted by the dirt and refuse of this earth. Why then does it rush headlong in that very

direction? But what power has it to keep still for its own sake? By command of that All-ruling One, though it be stained with the dirt of the earth, still it has to humble its pride and take a downward course, in order to fertilise the land, and make it yield grain.

I was musing thus, when suddenly I heard the solemn commandment of the Guide within me: "Give up thy pride, and be lowly like this river. The truth thou hast gained, the devotion and trustfulness that thou hast learnt here; go, make them known to the world." I was startled! Must I then turn back from this holy land of the Himalayas? I had never thought of this. After having gone through so much trouble to detach myself from the world, must I again return to it, and be one with worldly people? My mind took a downward course. I remembered the world, I thought of the home to which I should have to go back. My ears would be deafened by the noise of the world. This thought blighted my heart, and I returned to my rooms in a despondent frame of mind.

With night no song came to my lips. I lay down with an uneasy heart, and could not sleep well. I rose while it was yet dark, and found my heart trembling, and beating hard. I had never felt like this before, and was afraid I might fall seriously ill. Thinking it would do me good, I went out for a walk. After walking a long time I

came home when the sun had risen, yet my palpitation did not stop. Then I called Kishori and said, "Kishori! I shall not stay in Simla any longer; send for a *jhampan*." While saying these words I found my palpitation subsiding. Was this then the medicine I needed? All that day I went on making the necessary arrangements and preparations for going home; and this gave me relief. The palpitation ceased, and I felt all right.

It was God's command that I should go back home; could man's will hold out against that? At the slightest protest against that command, one's very physical nature revolted,—such was His ordinance. "The inner command is everything: the outer command is nothing." Could I possibly stay in Simla any longer? My senses were then saying to me, "What a lot of trouble you have given us during these two years. In spite of all our entreaties and prayers, you have not gratified even a single harmless impulse of ours; now we have become weak, and cannot serve you any longer." Whether my constitution was weak or strong, it did not matter; how could I stay on in Simla? His will was my law. Harmonising my will with His, I made ready to go home. Strength inspired my mind. There were still many dangers on the road, and rebel bands lurked still in various places. But I did not give way to these fears. As the river's mighty current rolls onward in spite of obstructing

stones, so did I also not pay heed to any hindrance whatever.

On the 1st of Kartik, the *Vijaya*,[1] tenth day of the moon, my *jhampan*, *dandi*, and horse were all ready on the high road of Simla bazar. My countrymen and friends gathered round me very sorrowfully to bid me good-bye. After taking leave of everybody, I got into my *jhampan* and started. On the *Vijaya* day Simla cast me forth. It is very easy to go downhill, and I soon reached Kalka at the foot of the hill. The night passed, and in the morning I saw the beautiful sunrise, which cheered and brightened my heart. Leaving Kalka I came to Panjour. Here I found there were grand doings in a garden. Hundreds of fountains were playing: they seemed to have gained new life, and joyfully spouting water, imitated the rains by their continued showers. I had never seen such beautiful fountains before.

Thence I went to Umballa, and hiring a push-push travelled in it day and night. The nights were moonlit, the full moon of autumn bloomed in the sky, a cool breeze blew across the open fields. Looking out of the carriage, I saw horsemen riding beside it. For fear of the rebels, Government had given orders for outriders to accompany the carriages at night, to ensure the safety of passengers. From this I guessed the dangers of the road, and felt

[1] The last day of the Durga Puja.

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

carriage with the officers, and left Cawnpore. At 3 o'clock we reached Allahabad. The station had not then been built. Our train stopped somewhere on the road, and from there we got down and walked. After going a distance of six miles, we reached the travellers' bungalow in Allahabad, which was quite full. There was no room for me there. I had a chair with me; I sat on it under a tree and kept my things there. Kishori brought a jar of water for me from the dak-bungalow. I said to him, "Go and take rooms for me in Allahabad city, and come and fetch me; I shan't touch anything before I move into lodgings." Kishori went away, and shortly after a carriage drove up. Two men with their cloths round their necks got down from it and said to me, "Our house is near the Fort. If you will deign to stay there, sir, we shall feel highly honoured; we are now in mourning for our father." I accompanied them to their house. They had a household god, from whose offerings *dal*[1] and *roti*[2] came for me in the evening. I was then feeling very hungry, and thought the food extremely good. I ate it all with great relish, and was hoping to get some more; but nobody thought of offering me any! After partaking of this consecrated food, I took my rest there that day.

[1] Pulse. [2] Unleavened bread.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE next day I saw Government had posted placards in the streets of Allahabad for travellers, saying, "Government is not responsible for the lives of those who want to go farther east." This notice made me feel very disturbed in mind. I heard that Kumar Singh was still fighting in Dinapore. If a land journey was so full of dangers, would travelling by boat be safer ? I wondered. Thus thinking I went for a walk on the banks of the Ganges. Thence I saw smoke issuing from a steamer which was on the point of starting. I ran and got on board, and asked the captain where it was going. He said, "A steamer has stuck on the sands a little way off in mid-stream, and this steamer is now going to haul it off ; after returning here it will go to Calcutta three days later." I then expressed my eagerness to secure one of the cabins. "This steamer has been chartered by Government to carry the sick and wounded soldiers to Calcutta," he said, "and passengers cannot be accommodated here. But I

can take you if you can get an order from the Brigadier-General."

Taking him at his word, after much searching I found and presented myself at the Brigadier's office, which was a big bungalow. He was then very busy with other matters, and asked me to come the next morning. I couldn't make out whether morning meant early morning or 10 o'clock, so I presented myself at his door early in the morning. I waited and waited till 10 o'clock, when he called me to his office. I made my request, to which he replied, "The soldiers will go by this steamer, and none but their families can be accommodated with them." I said, "Since Government are warning passengers against travelling by land, and I am getting an opportunity of going safely by boat with their people, why should you not let me go?" The Brigadier had thought that I might be one of the rebel party. On hearing this he asked me who I was. I told him I knew Lord Hay and others in Simla, and introduced myself more fully. He then wrote a letter to the captain of the steamer, asking him to give me a cabin. The steamer had come back in the meantime, and was ready to go to Calcutta. I went and gave the captain the Brigadier's letter. But now he said, "What's the good of this letter? There is not a single cabin vacant on board; how can I give you one?" "If no cabin is to be had, I shall go on deck;

take the price of a cabin, and let me go on the deck."

Hearing our altercation, the captain of the cargo-boat attached to the steamer came up and said, "There is no cabin available in the steamer, but I am willing to let the cabin I occupy in the boat." "All right," I said, "I will pay you the money, you give me your cabin." "Go and get your things," he replied; "meanwhile I shall put the cabin in order for you." Delighted with this offer, I hastened to the house and brought all my things. My old friend, Nilkamal Mitra, gave me a basket of sweets for the journey, which came in very useful.

The steamer soon left for Calcutta. But on reaching Benares an impediment occurred. The captain got a telegram to say that a second steamer was coming for this cargo-boat, and this one would have to go back and fetch another cargo-boat. The captain was much disturbed on receiving this telegram, and kept saying, "I shall give up Government service, there is no knowing what orders they'll give next. To have to go back after coming all this way, —this is outrageous." The captain was anxious to go home, and if the steamer went away leaving the cargo-boat behind, the ladies and gentlemen on board would have to return also: so they all put their heads together, and decided that there was nothing in the telegram which obliged them to leave the

cargo-boat on that very spot. When they met the incoming steamer they would give it the cargo-boat and go back. Perhaps they might reach Calcutta before meeting it. The captain agreed to this proposal, and set out towards Calcutta.

While on board, I saw in the papers the news of the death of my youngest brother, Nagendranath. Grieved at this sad news, I absent-mindedly left the deck and went into my cabin to fetch something, and as I hurriedly left the cabin with it my foot found no resting-place. Without taking another step forward I instantly leaned backwards and fell into the cabin. The sailors ran up with cries of dismay, and saw that one of my legs was hanging in the hold and the rest of my body was lying in the cabin. "Did you not see that we had taken up the boards in front of the cabin in order to haul up the luggage?" they said. No, I had not noticed it, I had thought the passage all right as usual. Had I taken another step, I would have fallen into the hold fifty cubits deep, and smashed my head to pieces. That day my life was saved. But—

The robber of the world sleeps not, do not think yourself safe from him.

If he does not steal to-day, he will steal to-morrow.

On nearing Rampur Boalia, we saw a steamer coming along trailing clouds of smoke. At this the captain stopped our steamer, the approaching steamer also stopped, and both cast anchor there.

The ladies and gentlemen went and saw that this steamer was a small one, and had very few cabins, which would not accommodate them all. The men might manage to lodge somehow on deck ; but what would the ladies do ? The captain went to see the military surgeon and other men in the cargo-boat, and asked them to give up their cabins. The military surgeon was a plain-spoken man, and said, " I have given up my cabin many a time to please the ladies, but have never got so much as a 'thank you' for my pains." None of the men agreeing to give up their cabins to the ladies, at last the captain came and entreated me, saying, " There is no room for the ladies ; they would be much obliged if you would kindly give up your cabin." I did so with the greatest pleasure. At this the captain was very pleased, and said, " The English gentlemen refused to make room for the ladies, though they are their own countrymen ; but how generously you have done this for them. We are all most grateful to you." I was not put to any inconvenience by giving up my cabin, as the captain and others made very nice arrangements for my comfort on deck. I slept at ease at night on deck in the open air. I sent Kishori home in advance by boat, in order to tell them I was coming, because it would take some time to change steamers at Rampur and make other arrangements.

The next day we started, and on the 1st of

Agrahayan 1780 (A.D. 1858) I safely arrived in Calcutta. I was then forty-one years old.

Never shall I forget Thy mercy all my life; night and day will it remain entwined within my heart.

NAMASTESTU, BRAHMAN, NAMASTESTU!
SALUTATION TO THEE, O BRAHMA!

APPENDIX A

SELECT SERMONS AND PRAYERS BY THE MAHARSHI DEVENDRANATH TAGORE

I

Sermons from the Book of Vyâkhyân

1

"Him ye know not who created all this world, Who dwelleth in your souls distinct from all else.

Ye go about the world enveloped in a cloud, engaged in wrangling, addicted to the pleasures of life, and engrossed in ceremonial observances."

O Men, Him you know not, who created heaven and earth and all that is in them. By His will the sun shines and illumines this world; by His will the moon sheds her ambrosial light by night, nourishing plants and trees; by His will, at the close of the summer-season, the clouds, driven by the wind, pour down welcome showers to allay the heat; by His will rivers flow from snowy mountains to irrigate and fertilise the earth; by His will the trees of the forest and the garden put forth flowers breathing delightful fragrance, and bear fruits delicious to the taste; by His will

the mother-earth supports countless beings with her inexhaustible stores of fruitful harvests; by His will a mother's love, flowing out with the milk of her breast, sustains the life of her infant; by His will man, endowed with wisdom and righteousness, has risen higher than brutes in the scale of existence; by His will heaven and earth, the minutes and the hours, the years and the seasons run on smoothly in their several courses. Alas! you know Him not, though He dwells within your inmost souls.

He dwelleth within you, distinct from all else, in the inmost recesses of your souls. The God who dwelleth within your heart of hearts, you know not; and how should you know Him, when you go about the world enveloped in the darkness of ignorance as in a thick cloud, engaged in vain wrangling, allured by pleasures of the senses, and spending your days in a round of useless rites and ceremonies. If you wish to know the Highest, the Para-Brahma, you must enrich your minds with wisdom and knowledge, embrace the truth in word and in deed, bring your senses under the subjection of moral laws, and renouncing all desire for reward, pray and strive for true Salvation (*mukti*). Such are the precepts of the Rishis of old. The latter-day sages also speak in the same strain:

Woe to thy life, that thou shouldst not know Brahma, that thou shouldst not worship Him in the sanctuary of thy heart, deeming far off One who is so near.

He, who dwelleth within and pervadeth the sky, the sun, moon, and stars, the air, fire, and water, the light and darkness, and ruleth them from within, whose manifestation they are, and yet they know Him not, He is the Being that dwells within each of you, as your inner soul. This *Antaryâmin*, the Inner Guide, the immortal Being, is in close contact with our souls. He cannot be touched with the

external hand, but we can feel Him and realise His presence in our souls. The Yogi, who detaches himself from the world, enjoys the boundless happiness of transcendental communion with Brahma. He is *Arupa*, without form and without colour. He is neither white nor yellow, nor blue nor red; this formless and colourless Being is by no means visible to the fleshly eye, but to the eye of wisdom He is revealed as the embodiment of joy and immortality. The blessed saint who has seen His form of Truth and Love, remains absorbed in his Beloved for ever and ever. The beauty of that Supreme Love is beyond compare. It knows no increase nor decrease. The resplendent sun and moon, the forest blooming with flowers, the lily of the lake with its multiple petals (*satadala*), all earthly Youth, Beauty, and Grace, are but faint reflections of that divine Beauty. The love that is fixed on that Beauty never fades. He is without flavour (*Rasa*), and cannot be tasted as we taste water, fruit, or honey; but He is *Rasa* itself, the very essence of sweetness. He who has tasted that essence is blessed with joy everlasting. He is without odour (*Agandha*), but the morning flowers are charged with balmy fragrance by coming in contact with Him: He is without sound (*Asavda*); but He dwelleth in the souls of men and women, and silently conveyeth these Commandments to their conscience:

Speak the Truth. Do the right. Righteousness is the highest of all, and is honey-sweet for all. Thou shalt not earn money by unjust means. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's riches, nor be jealous of his good fortune. Forgive one another's trespasses. Thou shalt not commit adultery, nor indulge in intoxicating drink. Acquire knowledge with diligence. Bear thy burden of duty with patience. Be moderate in food and recreation. Do thy house-work with cheerfulness and wifely devotion. Forbear

from quarrelling, wrangling, and foolish talk. Be queen of thy household, devoted to good works, and armed with self-control. Obey and honour thine elders. Pity the poor and downtrodden. Give up extravagant and miserly habits. Neglect not thy temporal and spiritual welfare. Shrink not from sacrificing life itself at the call of Duty.

Such are the silent admonitions of the Spirit in every soul. He who performs his life-work in obedience to these commandments conquers death. What though his body be slain? He reaches the immortal regions, bearing the Life of his life within his soul.

This Supreme Spirit cannot be known by fine speech, nor by the understanding, nor by much learning. He alone knows, unto whom the Spirit reveals Himself. And knowing Him, he is fired with zeal and enthusiasm to proclaim the glory of his Beloved. And to whom doth He reveal Himself? To him who hungers and thirsts after the Lord, doth He reveal Himself in His infinite Majesty.

O worship Him, the Infinite Spirit, the First Cause uncreate, whose works these are. Let us worship in a tranquil spirit, Him who is Peace and Rest.

II

The Indwelling Spirit

"He who dwelleth in and within the soul, whose image the soul is, who ruleth it from within, and yet it knows Him not; He is the Inner Guide (*Antaryâmin*), the Immortal."

What a blessing it is for us that we are able to sanctify our souls by worshipping the Holy of Holies, in this sacred morning hour! Holiness, and illumination of the spirit, can only come from His worship. He is enthroned for

ever in every soul, and it is His presence that sanctifies it. Whenever the soul strays away from the Supreme Spirit, it is filled with sorrow, stricken with decay, and consumed by unholy desires. But as we cherish God within our souls, we are purified and sanctified. Where is this Supreme Spirit? He is not far to seek, He is in close contact with every one of us. He is within our souls.

"He who dwelleth in and within the soul and sanctifieth it, whose image the soul is, who ruleth it from within, and yet it knows Him not; He is the Inner Guide, the Immortal." This is the saying of one of our ancient Rishis, the inspired utterance of that brave and high-souled Rishi, Yajnavalkya, and we find it in the white Yajurveda, Madhyandina Sâkhâ. We cannot find God by travelling in distant countries, or making arduous pilgrimages. Those who seek Him in the external world come away disappointed. Things of the spirit cannot be seen in a visible form in the outer world. He alone sees Him who looks for Him in the inner sanctuary of the soul. If God had fixed His abode in the highest Heaven, far far away from us, how should we have reached Him there? But it is not necessary to travel far and wide in order to see Him. Whenever we bring our minds under control, and turn our eye inward, calm and undistracted, we see Him enshrined in our innermost souls.

We have not to go far to see Him who dwelleth within our souls. As however the body has to exert itself in order to go a great distance, so in the act of self-introspection it is necessary that the mind should strive with energy. Training the mind is a far harder task than mortifying the flesh. Whatever else you may do, the one thing necessary in order to realise God within the soul is self-discipline. One must be calm and serene, patient and self-possessed, in order to attain the desired end. We may arrive at a certain

destination by walking hundreds of miles, but though the soul is nearest to us of all, yet it is extremely difficult to reach it, after overcoming worldly distractions. Our attention varies according to the strength of our desire. God's presence within the soul cannot be realised without the utmost desire and concentration of the mind. But the task, however difficult, must be accomplished. Why come to the house of worship, if you go away empty-hearted, without seeing God? If we should fail to realise His presence in our souls, or turn to Him with love and reverence, our object in coming here is wholly frustrated.

What are the attributes of this soul, wherein dwells the Supreme Spirit? Let us consider the question attentively. We have it in the Vedas, "That which knows 'I smell this,' that is the soul"; the nose is but the instrument of smelling. "That which knows 'I speak,' that is the soul"; the tongue is but the instrument of speech. "That which knows 'I hear,' that is the soul"; the ear is but the instrument of hearing. "That which knows 'I think,' that is the soul"; the mind is its divine eye, the internal eye by which it sees. The soul is neither hand nor foot, nor eye nor ear, nor is it the organs of smell or speech. The soul is that which sees with the eye, hears with the ear, grasps with the hand, walks with the feet. When, through meditation, we come to know the soul, we become privileged to see the Supreme Spirit. As we cannot see the master of the house without entering it, so we must go into the chamber of the soul before we can see the Lord, its master. It is from the knowledge of the self, the Ego, that we rise to the knowledge of God. Hence it behoves thee, first of all, to know thyself; the self that sees, feels, hears, thinks, understands.

Now on what does this soul rest? To this question the answer is, that the soul rests in the Eternal, the Supreme

Spirit. When the human soul, feeling itself to be homeless, seeks its life's refuge, and calm, tranquil, and chastened by discipline, becomes pure and undefiled, then it sees God within, and hears His thrilling, living Voice:

I am Brahma in thy soul. Take refuge in Me and thou shalt be free from sin and anguish.

We cannot hear that soul-stirring voice, that sweet, consoling message with our bodily ear; but it can be heard when we are absorbed in contemplation and inspired by spiritual wisdom.

O Lord, he alone knows Thee, to whom Thou revealest Thyself. And knowing Thee, he sings Thy praises for ever.

The Supreme Spirit dwells within light and darkness, within the sun and moon; but the light and darkness, the sun and moon know Him not. He also dwells in the soul of man, and the soul knows Him not, though to it has been vouchsafed the privilege of knowing Him. When by purity of life and spiritual culture the soul attains to a state in which it is filled with a deep yearning after the Lord, so that it cannot do without Him,—to such a pure and devout soul doth the Lord reveal Himself. O seek Him, the Indwelling Spirit, within thy soul, and not in the empty space. As blood and breath are the life of the body, so the life of the soul is God. Blessed is he who hath entered into holy communion with this Brahma. Such fellowship, commenced here on earth, never ends. Even though the body lies here forsaken the soul enters into life everlasting, and attains all its desires in union with the Eternal. Such a union is the crown of our desires, our heaven, our salvation:

This Supreme Spirit cannot be known by fine speech, nor by keen intelligence, nor by much learning. He alone knows, who seeks Him with fervent prayer and unswerving devotion.

To such a seeker the Lord reveals Himself, and all his desires are fulfilled. Oh! Arise, awake, hie thee to His door with a humble and sincere heart, and thy prayer will be answered. The temptations and fascinations of the world will come to an end; thou shalt have joy to thy right, and enjoyment to thy left; and thy soul shall sing pæans of His love in ecstasy. O! hearken to His low and solemn voice, as dwelling within the finite soul, He uttereth these words: "*Aham Brahmasmi*—I am The Brahma."

III

The Revelation of God in the Human Soul

"The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and the stars,
Nor do these lightnings, much less this fire.
When He shines, everything shines after Him:
By His light all this is lighted."

O Master, asked the disciple, how can I know God, the blissful, who has not been defined, whose infinite Majesty cannot be explained by words and is beyond our conception, and yet who is realised by those earnest seekers after truth who are devoted to Him? Who or what is there that can reveal Him? The guru answered, "The sun, the moon and the stars cannot reveal God, nor these lightnings, much less this fire. In the bright presence of God the sun and the moon lose themselves, and they and every other lesser light become dark. It is only the light of the soul that can reveal the Lord. From the light of the soul you can have a faint idea of that Light of Truth."

But what is this light of the soul? Look into your inner self, with the utmost attention of a mind abstracted from outward objects, and you will realise what the light of

the soul is. When the sun is set, when the moon is not visible in the sky, when the fire is extinguished, what is the light that remains? It is only the light of the soul that is then visible. Realise this truth, even at this very moment. We have not now the light of the sun, for the sun has set; nor have we here the light of the moon; the only light we have here is that given by fire—the light of lamps. Imagine all these lamps to have been put out; we shall then be in the midst of utter darkness. After the lamps in this hall are extinguished, should one and all present here remain as calm and silent as they are now, they would not know one another, lightless and soundless as this edifice would then be. But though we may all then remain in the midst of darkness and silence, the light within us—the light of the soul—will not be extinguished. Every one present here will then see his own self; the effulgence of the soul will shine the brighter in the midst of that gloom. With the light of the soul that Light of Truth will also reveal itself; with the soul will be manifested its Cause, its Refuge, its Friend, its immortal Lord, who knows all that passes within it. He whom the sun and the moon cannot reveal, is revealed by the light of the soul.

How ignorant is he who seeks Him in the light that illumines the external world. In the external or material universe, we only behold the mere shadow of the Lord's wisdom and goodness; but within us is His light. In the soul of man is He most brightly manifested. When the light of the Divine Sun shineth on the soul, that resplendent sheath of perfection, what happens then? The effect is just the same as when sometimes in the early morning the sun and the moon are found shining together. We then see that the moon is manifested by the light reflected by the sun. So shines the soul of man by the light of God. The life of the human soul, its piety, its knowledge, its

love, are but reflections of the Supreme Soul. He alone stands revealed as the primary cause and sole support of the soul. Can one regard one's self when the sun of the Supreme Soul shineth in the firmament of one's inmost being? Can the moon be bright under the dazzling light of the sun? All our littlenesses are dispelled by the light of the beauty and immaculate purity of the Lord. As our love of God waxes, our love of self wanes. Thus when love, purified by being centred on God, returns to the earth, how beautiful it appears, and what a radiance it sheds! By its contact with the Lord love is sanctified, and comes down on earth, and sweetens all places. The human soul realises how impure is its nature when it dissociates itself from God, and how noble it becomes when it is with Him.

We are so impotent that our minds cannot contain even the momentary revelation of God, but even such momentary revelation has the effect of renewing our life. Like the lightning the Lord shows Himself, and then instantly disappears, but we cherish the hope that although here He offers us His embrace only at long intervals, hereafter we shall be perpetually locked within His embrace. It is indeed not an insignificant earnest of the future that, although we are weak and frail, and burdened by sin, and smarting under remorse, we can yet behold God revealed to us, though only for a few moments. This demonstrates the Lord's beneficent intention to give Himself more freely to us in future. We consider ourselves blessed for the privilege we enjoy at present of beholding God momentarily; but how supremely blessed will be our lot when we shall be able to enjoy this privilege for longer spaces of time! What would we not give in order to attain that condition? When the vision of God granted to us in this earthly life is as evanescent as lightning, and yet mighty enough to induce the absolute upheaval of the whole tenor of our life, then

what supreme good shall we not attain when He will shine before our eyes like the sun, without ceasing? "Now we see through a glass darkly," but a time will come when the Sun of Righteousness will shine perpetually over the inner being, and we shall behold Him face to face without a break. And for this divine affinity we are being trained in this life.

We ought frequently to gauge to what extent the Supreme Soul is manifested in our soul, how far our union with God has been consummated, and what sacrifices we have been able to make for Him. We need not be anxious about the riches we acquire, or the honour or distinction or fame we attain. Calculate how much you have hoarded of that treasure which is imperishable. You attain in this life all you covet, when you gain this treasure. Why should we not rejoice at the hope that we are destined to inherit the treasure which is everlasting, to partake of that supreme good which will not pass away? Why should not that enable you to slight worldly adversity and prosperity? What a blessing it is that we shall hereafter behold the Lord, whom neither the sun nor the moon can reveal, manifested as clearly as the sun or the moon! Experience in this world gives us a fore-glimpse of this beatitude. When such enjoyment of God becomes a ceaseless and perpetual reality, what then is misery to us, or pang of bereavement? Then we can endure all misery and affliction, and our body, if feeble, becomes strengthened, and our mind, if without vigour, becomes invigorated. Can the hope of this blessedness that is to come hereafter be without any potency, without any influence on our mind? Is it not our guide on the road that leads to the mysterious and eternal future? Where experience harmonises with hope, can the gloom of scepticism linger?

II

Prayers from the Book of Vyâkhyân

I

O Lord most high, we have come to Thee, not in the pride of strength, but with a humble and lowly heart, that Thou mayst uplift and elevate us. We approach Thee not as saints but as sinners, that Thou mayst deliver us from evil, and save us from ignorance and frailty. We come to Thee, not bedecked with prosperity, but as poor afflicted souls, that our days of misery may be brought to an end. We come to Thee as creatures tainted with impurity, that Thou mayst wash away our iniquities, and fill our hearts with a holy and righteous spirit.

Groping our way in the dark, we seek after Thee, that Thou mayst lead us to Thy ineffable light. Entangled in the snares of death we call unto Thee, that Thou mayst conduct us to Thy mansion of immortality. All that pertains to us is utter misery; Thou art our only good and only bliss. Depending on Thee we eagerly await the Kingdom of Truth, the Light and Life everlasting. Our faith in Thy goodness is firm and unwavering.

Lead me, O Lord, from out the false unto the true. Lead me from darkness unto light, from death unto immortality. O Thou that art self-effulgent, do Thou reveal Thyself unto me. O Thou dread Lord, may Thy benign face protect me for ever and ever. Peace! Peace!

II

O Supreme Spirit, Thou hast sent us into this world to live under Thy protection, and to love Thee and do Thy work. Trained in this life, we shall mount up to higher spheres of existence, and ever advance towards Thee. May we never, through our fault, be deprived of the deathless, priceless bliss that Thou hast reserved for us. May we bring our soul and lay it at Thy feet after we have ennobled and purified it, and replace in Thy hands the precious gifts that Thou hast conferred upon us. Unless Thou helpst us, we can do nothing. We therefore pray for Thy everlasting aid: do Thou lead us along Thy blessed path of righteousness. Peace! Peace!

III

O Spirit Supreme, Soul uncreate, Thou dwellest in our soul and rulest it as Thou rulest the universe. To every creature living under Thy protection Thou hast assigned its proper vocation. He who loveth to do Thy work doeth work that is holy. He who hath seen the glory of Thy countenance, the beneficence of Thy handiwork, never dreams of severing himself from Thee. The littleness of his own self, so addicted to evil-doing, becomes repulsive to him, and the lofty sublimity of Thy Being reveals its beauty to his eyes, and draws him towards Thee. Looking inward at my soul, so prone to evil, my heart is filled with penitence; but when I contemplate Thy holiness my heart is sanctified. My soul is mortified when it thinks of its ever-recurring sorrows and miseries; but my heart rejoiceth when it beholds the light of Thy countenance.

O Lord my God, Thou art our all. When we discern Thy hand, and understand Thy truth, and strive to attain

Thy goodness, even in the minutest degree, we feel exceeding joy. Everlasting is the union of the soul with Thee. Dwelling within our hearts, Thou speakest in Thy still small voice, and ceaselessly dost impart to us such counsel as may conduce to our present good and future happiness. What need have we to obey any other voice, when it is Thou that speakest in accents sweet and pure? Why should we not listen, rapt in silence, to those words of truth and goodness, when it is Thou who utterest them and instillest them into our understanding? Should we not keep our ears turned towards that direction from which Thy voice proceeds? At every step of our life dost Thou deliver unto us Thy commandments, and whenever we stumble, Thou dost strengthen our souls with the strength of righteousness: hence are we enabled to stand erect: else, like a staff unsupported, we must have been levelled to the dust. Whatever be the commandments Thou givest, they should be laid to heart by us; and whatever be the work Thou commandest, that it is our bounden duty to perform.

Forsake us not, O God my Lord, in this terrible world: abandon us not. We seek Thy shelter, we place ourselves under Thy protection: take us, O take us into Thy arms, as the mother takes up her children. Danger and difficulties beset us; the noise and confusion of the world tend to estrange us from Thee. Do Thou, who art all-merciful, protect us, and so ordain that nothing can separate us from Thee. Grant, O Lord, that we may devote ourselves to Thy work as long as life remains, in the full assurance that Thou art ever with us as our Father and our Mother. Peace! Peace!

IV

O Lord my God, how can I describe Thy glory? I do not know where to begin and where to end. Thou dwellest in that light unto which no man can approach; but the nearer I come to the end of my days on this earth, closer and closer do I feel Thee in my soul. My hair, once dark, has now grown white: the lustre of my eyes has become dim. My body is daily growing more and more feeble; but Thy mercy knows no decline. At this very moment Thy mercy makes its way into my inner being, and invigorates my soul with fresh strength and life.

O Thou Lord of mercy, lead me to Thy abode of bliss. I now yearn for nothing but Thee. Here I am keenly agitated by praise and blame, by the sorrows of life, and the pangs of separation from those near and dear to me. Thou alone art my refuge. Thou who bearest the burden of the whole universe, wilt Thou not bear the burden of this little heart of mine?

Thou, O Lord, art my hope and stay. When Thou art near misery cannot approach nor danger assail me; but when Thou art far away, even the point of a blade of *kusa* grass becomes as grievous as the heavy iron goad is to the elephant. O Lord my God, I come to Thee sorely afflicted by the tumult of the world, and seek Thy shelter; do Thou make me worthy of Thine abode of bliss. Peace! Peace!

V

O Supreme Spirit! sorely troubled by the sorrows, the passions, and the turmoil of the world, I look up to Thy lofty abode on high. Thou art kind to those that are humbled by affliction, and merciful to the poor in spirit.

Vouchsafe Thy mercy unto me. Thy blessings descend even on those that see Thee not, nor desire to know Thee. The veriest debauchee, who wholly devotes himself to the pursuit of pleasure and money-making, in utter forgetfulness of the world to come; even he is at times awakened to a sense of his higher destiny in the presence of death,—death, which Thou sendest as Thy messenger to bring him to his right senses. He regains momentary consciousness, like a man in delirium, and is then able perchance to catch a glimpse of Thee in the midst of the encircling darkness.

There is none in all this world who has not need of Thee; who seeks not for Thy blessings. Savage people steeped in ignorance and superstition, as also civilised nations enjoying the light of knowledge; all, all have need of Thy help and protection. Who is there that does not bow down before Thee? Thou art the Lord of creation and Monarch of all sentient beings. Thou art the Ruler of all; Thou keepest all under the domination of Thy law. Thou maintainest all Thy creatures as their Monarch, their Governor, their Father and Mother, their Friend and Comrade.

All pray to Thee with folded hands. Some pray for material gifts; others, burning with Divine fervour, pray to Thee for Thine own self, as the crowning gift above all else. Some pray to Thee for the enjoyment of paradise, others for the boon of salvation. Men are inspired to pray to Thee now by fear, now by hope. In some way or other all are impelled to come before Thy throne. O Lord my God, how manifold are the forms in which Thy mercy is manifested: how wonderful is Thy loving-kindness! My tongue refuses to give utterance to all that I feel. That mercy which I feel in my own insignificant life, the self-same mercy extends over the countless beings of Thy illimitable kingdom, and ministers to their diverse wants and

aspirations. Thy mercy shows itself in the day and in the night, in the heart of the mother, and the inmost life of the saint.

O Lord, I call upon Thee with all my mind and all my heart: do Thou grant me all that may help me to worship Thee. Employ my hands in Thy work, speed my feet on Thy errands, engage my tongue in singing Thy glory, immerse my mind in Thy contemplation, and unite my soul with Thee; let my soul find rest by resting in Thee, may it be filled with the light of Divine Wisdom.

How wonderful it is that Thou, Merciful Lord, shouldst instantly grant my prayer! I behold Thee at this very moment in my soul. I see that Thou art without form or shape; that Thou art holy, true, and beautiful. It is by Thy ordinance that the Sun and the Moon exist, upheld in space. By Thy ordinance the day and the night, the fortnight and the month, the seasons of the year, come and go. By Thy ordinance the rivers flow down from snowy mountains, and speed on their courses towards the east and the west. Should a man spend his whole life in the performance of penances, and sacrificial and expiatory rites and ceremonies prescribed in the *shastras*, yet know not Thee, fruitless will be his works. He who departs from the scene of this life without knowing Thee, is a pitiable creature, the lowest of the low: but he who quits this world after knowing Thee, is the true Brâhman. Blessed art Thou, O Lord of the Universe, blessed art Thou!

APPENDIX B

EXTRACT FROM THE FAREWELL OFFERING OF MAHARSHI DEVENDRANATH TAGORE

THIS offering of last words is, as it were, a voice from the blessed dead. He whose offering it is, in imminent expectation of a summons to his Maker's presence, meant it to be his final blessing to those so beloved of him on earth.—*Preface by Mohinî Mohan Chatterjee, dated 1st January 1889.*

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN—

Be ye united together; speak ye in unity; united know ye each the heart of the other.

As the gods of old with one mind received each his due offering, even so be ye of one mind!

Harmonious may your efforts be, and harmonious your thoughts and heart,

That beauteous Peace may dwell in your midst.

Live ye all one in heart and speech.

This loving blessing and benediction, which I have just expressed in Vedic words, it is meet ye should keep well in view in the midst of the world's wranglings and jars. If to

this end ye follow the way, then shall ye become gainers of your end. This way is the way of unity. If ye follow this way, all contentions shall depart from amongst you, Peace shall reign, and the Brâhma religion shall have triumph.

1. The Brâhma religion is a spiritual religion. Its seed-truth is this—By the soul shalt thou know the Supreme Soul. When God is seen in the soul, then, indeed, is He seen everywhere. The dearest dwelling-place of Him who is the root of all this complexity, the One Sovereign of all this universe, is the soul of man. If ye know not the soul, then all is empty. The soul is the root of the knowledge of God.

2. In this body dwells the soul; and within it, in the pure refulgence of spiritual consciousness, the pure, bodyless Supreme Soul is to be seen. With mind and body subdued, detached from all outward things, even-minded in sorrow and joy, self-contained, the Supreme Soul may be contemplated. This is spiritual union. When with love ye are united in this spiritual union, ye shall be delivered from all sin and shall attain the steps of salvation. After death, the body will be left here; but, united in this spiritual union, the soul shall dwell with the Soul Supreme for ever.

3. As for the health of the body ye partake of your regular daily meals, so for the soul's health the worship of God must be performed every day. The worship of God is the food of the soul.

4. "Loving Him and doing those deeds which are pleasing in His sight, this, indeed, is His worship." That Brahma, who is beyond Time and Space, and who yet pervades Time and Space, the Witness of all, Truth, Wisdom, and Infinity —knowing Him to be the Soul's Ruler and the Heart's Lord, adore Him every day with love; and, for the good of the world, busy yourself in the performance of those works

of righteousness which are pleasing in His sight. Never dissever these two ever-united limbs of God's worship.

5. Let only that be done which promoteth well-being. Do no evil to an evil-doer. If any should work unrighteousness, it should not be requited by unrighteousness. Always be righteous. Evil should be overcome by good, and unrighteousness by righteousness.

6. Contend with no one. Restrain anger; and, imbued with love and charity, behave justly to all. Let love be your rule of conduct with regard to others.

7. By day and night instruct yourselves, govern yourselves, and accept righteousness as the end of existence. For him who can subdue his heart and senses, there remains no cause for sorrow and suffering. For him who cannot restrain himself there is suffering on every side.

8. He who desireth the good of mankind must look on others as he looks on himself. It behoves thee to love thy neighbour, since it pleases thee to be loved by him; and to avoid giving pain by hatred, since it causes thee pain to be hated by another. Thus in all things shalt thou deal with others by comparing them with thyself; for as pleasure and pain affect thee, so do they affect all creatures. Such conduct alone is the means of attaining well-being.

9. He who adores God and loves man, is a saint. Such a man never rejoices in finding fault with men, for man is beloved of him. He is pained by the sight of a fault in others, and lovingly does he labour for its correction. He loves man as man; and owing to that love, is pleased by the sight of good, and grieved by the sight of evil in man. Therefore he is unable to proclaim the faults of others with rejoicing.

10. The satisfaction of the inner spirit, or, in other words, a good conscience, is the unfailing fruit of the practice of righteousness. In this approval of conscience is

felt the approval of God. If the inner spirit is satisfied, all sufferings cease. Without the practice of righteousness, the inner spirit is never satisfied. The mind may find enjoyment in the pleasures of the world, but if the conscience is diseased, then even the height of worldly bliss becomes valueless. Therefore, by the practice of righteousness, ye shall preserve a clear conscience, and ye shall abandon all things whereby the satisfaction of the spirit may be marred.

11. Ye shall seek the practice of righteousness to the utmost of your power. If, after the exercise of all your power, ye fail to attain the end, yet ye shall acquire merit thereby. God does not reckon what portion of His infinite work is performed by individuals. Let every one use the powers given him, without reservation; this is God's ordinance.

12. Ye shall abjure sinful thoughts, sinful speech, and sinful acts. Those who do not sin in thought, word, deed, or judgment—such saints truly practise austerity; not those who mortify the flesh. Therefore, abstaining from sin, engage in good works. Persevering on the road of righteousness, ye shall earn your livelihood.

13. If, by perseverance on the road of righteousness, ye are completely cast down, even then ye shall not turn your thoughts to unrighteous means. Protect Dharma with your lives, and Dharma will protect you.

14. Not father or mother, nor wife or child, nor friend or relation, remains as our stay in the next world. Righteousness alone remains. Alone a man is born, alone he dies, alone he enjoys the good fruits of his righteous acts, and alone he suffers the evil consequences of his bad deeds. Friends, leaving on the earth his body like a stock or stone, turn away from him; but righteousness follows him whither he goeth. Therefore ye shall, step by step, acquire righteousness, which shall be your stay.

Religion is our friend in this world, and Religion is the guide to the next:

Religion is as honey unto all creatures.

15. "Not by wealth, nor by the begetting of children, nor by works, but by renunciation alone, is immortality attained." Renunciation is not the renunciation of the world by becoming an anchorite, dwelling in the wilderness. It is while dwelling at home, and living in the world, that all lusts of the heart should be cast out:

When all lusts that dwell in the heart of man are cast out, then the mortal becomes immortal, and even on earth attains God.

16. With all diligence shall ye cherish your wives and children and relations; but, being yourselves free from desire, remain unattached to the fruit of your acts, and then ye shall be able to mount the steps of salvation. God's own love furnishes the most perfect example. See how mindful He is of the interests of the world. He never forgets to give food even to a single worm or insect. Even in the bowels of arid mountains, He supplies nourishment to living creatures. Yet He keeps nothing for Himself. He is always giving to all, and never receives. By the light of this example, ye too, forgetting yourselves, shall be vowed to work for the good of the world. Being united to Him, ye shall perform the duties of life. That which ye shall know to be His command, ye must obey with your lives. That which ye shall know to be against His will, ye shall shun like poison. If thus, forgetful of self, ye perform His work, then be sure He will not forget you. All the wants that ye have, He will fulfil. Whatever He gives you, with gratitude receive it as plenty. In whatever condition He may place you, with that be contented. In seasons of prosperity,

live in obedience to Him ; and in seasons of adversity, take refuge in Him : and ye shall not be perplexed. At the time of action, act resting in Him ; at the time of rest, rest even in Him. This body will move about on earth, but your souls will be united with Him. Even in death there is no dissolution of this union.

17. Blessed is that soul which, self-subdued, freed from sin and impurity like the moon from the shadow of eclipse, and casting off the pride of flesh, can rest in the Supreme Soul. That soul is not cast down by disease ; is not frightened by death. It sees from here the abode of God ; to it the door of the infinitude of progress is opened, and before it millions on millions of heavens shine forth. On this side is the billowy world of change, on the other side the Peaceful Abode of God : in the middle God Himself, like a bridge, preserves the position of both. Neither day nor night, nor death, disease, or sorrow, nor good or evil deed is able to cross this bridge. All kinds of sin fall back from there. Sin has no power in the Sinless Abode of Brahma. The liberated soul, leaving behind him the sin and sorrow of this world, attains the Abode of Brahma, beyond this world. There the blind cease to be blind ; the sin-stricken become free from sin ; the sorrowing free from sorrow. There even night becomes day : for the Brâhma-loka is for ever resplendent, to that splendour there is no end.

18. Following the previous teachings of Brâhma Dharma, I make you this offering of my last words. May ye realise it in your lives and attain to everlasting salvation—this is my prayer !

OM ! PEACE ! PEACE ! PEACE !

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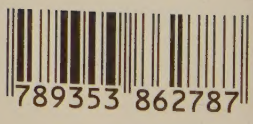

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